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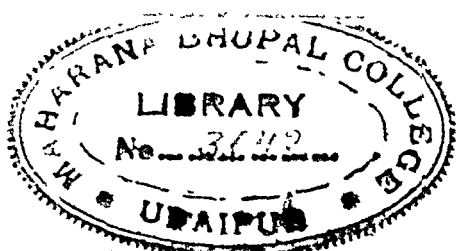
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EDITOR'S NOTE

TO the compiler of such a selection as this, two courses are open. He can give either a little from many, or much from at most half-a-dozen: passing glimpses of this or that feature on the canvases in a crowded gallery, or a few portraits at full length. In this difficulty, the Editor was guided by what seemed to him the sound consideration that, of all forms of literary expression, the Essay is the most personal. To read a single essay by X, Y, or Z, is like meeting a man for the first time—an unsatisfying entertainment which is generally very soon forgotten, and which, if it were not the inevitable prelude to better acquaintance, we should seek to avoid. But when we have read five or six of them, we are old friends: the Essay has had time to do its work and to make us intimate, not with its subject—that is immaterial—but with its author.

All this, of course, is quite apart from that other question, whether in the five essayists to whom this volume is limited the selector has chosen the greatest living masters. Fifty years or more may be needed to confirm his choice. But if it is too early yet to attempt a final judgment, he can at least claim that his chosen few are modern, representative, and delightfully contrasted.

The books from which the various essays (by permission of authors and publisher) have been extracted are indicated in each case in the list of contents.

E. V. R.

October 1926

HILAIRE BELLOC

THE OLD THINGS

THOSE who travel about England for their pleasure or, for that matter, about any part of Western Europe, rightly associate with such travel the pleasure of history ; for history adds to a man, giving him, as it were, a great memory of things—like a human memory, but stretched over a far longer space than that of one human life. It makes him, I do not say wise and great, but certainly in communion with wisdom and greatness.

It adds also to the soil he treads, for to this it adds meaning. How good it is when you come out of Tewkesbury by the Cheltenham road to look upon those fields to the left and know that they are not only pleasant meadows, but also the place in which a great battle of the mediæval monarchy was decided, or as you stand by that ferry, which is not known enough to Englishmen (for it is one of the most beautiful things in England), and look back and see Tewkesbury tower, framed between tall trees over the level of the Severn, to see also the Abbey buildings in your eye of the mind—a great mass of similar stone with solid Norman walls, stretching on hugely to the right of the Minster.

All this historical sense and the desire to marry History with Travel is very fruitful and nourishing, but there is another interest, allied to it, which is very nearly neglected,

and which is yet in a way more fascinating and more full of meaning. This interest is the interest in such things as lie behind recorded history, and have survived into our own times. For underneath the general life of Europe, with its splendid epic of great Rome turned Christian, crusading, discovering, furnishing the springs of the Renaissance, and flowering at last materially into this stupendous knowledge of to-day, the knowledge of all the Arts, the power to construct and to do—underneath all that is the foundation on which Europe is built, the stem from which Europe springs; and that stem is far, far older than any recorded history, and far, far more vital than any of the phenomena which recorded history presents.

Recorded history for this island and for Northern France and for the Rhine Valley is a matter of two thousand years; for the Western Mediterranean of three; but the things of which I speak are to be reckoned in tens of thousands of years. Their interest does not lie only nor even chiefly in things that have disappeared. It is indeed a great pleasure to rummage in the earth and find polished stones wrought by men who came so many centuries before us, and of whose blood we certainly are; and it is a great pleasure to find, or to guess that we find, under Canterbury the piles of a lake or marsh dwelling, proving that Canterbury has been there from all time; and that the apparently defenceless Valley City was once chosen as an impregnable site, when the water-meadows of the Stour were impassable as marsh, or with difficulty passable as a shallow lagoon. And it is delightful to stand on the earthwork a few miles west and to say to oneself (as one can say with a fair certitude), "Here was the British camp defending the south-east; here the tenth legion charged." All these are

folk strengthen their wet lands as they have strengthened them all these thousands of years ; you climb up out of that depression, you get you over a stile, and there you are again upon a lane. You follow that lane, and once more it stops dead. This time there is a field before you. No right of way, no trace of a path, nothing but grass rounded into those parallel ridges which mark the modern decay of the corn lands and pasture—alas !—taking the place of ploughing. Now your pleasure comes in casting about for the trail ; you look back along the line of the Way ; you look forward in the same line till you find some indication, a boundary between two parishes, perhaps upon your map, or two or three quarries set together, or some other sign, and very soon you have picked up the line again.

So you go on mile after mile, and as you tread that line you have in the horizons that you see, in the very nature and feel of the soil beneath your feet, in the skies of England above you, the ancient purpose and soul of this Kingdom. Up this same line went the Clans marching when they were called Northward to the host ; and up this went slow, creaking wagons with the lead of the Mendips or the tin of Cornwall or the gold of Wales.

And it is still there ; it is still used from place to place as a high road, it still lives in modern England. There are some of its peers, as for instance the Ermine Street, far more continuous, and affording problems more rarely ; others like the ridgeway of the Berkshire Downs, which Rome hardly touched, and of which the last two thousand years has, therefore, made hardly anything ; you may spend a delightful day piecing out exactly where it crossed the Thames, making your guess at it, and wondering as you sit there by Streatley Vicarage whether those islands did not form a natural weir below which lay the ford.

The roads are the most obvious things. There are many more; for instance, thatch. The same laying of the straw in the same manner, with the same art, has continued, we may be certain, from a time long before the beginning of history. See how in the Fen Land they thatch with reeds, and how upon the Chalk Downs with straw from the Lowlands. I remember once being told of a record in a manor, which held of the Church and which lay upon the southern slope of the Downs, that so much was entered for "straw from the Lowlands": then, years afterwards, when I had to thatch a Bethlehem in an orchard underneath tall elms—a pleasant place to write in, with the noise of bees in the air—the man who came to thatch said to me: "We must have straw from the Lowlands; this upland straw is no good for thatching." Immediately when I heard him say this there was added to me ten thousand years. And I know another place in England, far distant from this, where a man said to me that if I wished to cross in a winter mist, as I had determined to do, Cross-Fell, that great summit of the Pennines, I must watch the drift of the snow, for there was no other guide to one's direction in such weather. And I remember another man in a little boat in the North Sea, as we came towards the Foreland, talking to me of the two tides, and telling me how if one caught the tide all the way up to Long Nose and then went round it on the end of the flood, one caught a new tide up London river, and so made two tides in one day. He spoke with the same pleasure that silly men show when they talk about an accumulation of money. He felt wealthy and proud from the knowledge, for by this knowledge he had two tides in one day. Now knowledge of this sort is older than ten thousand years; and so is the knowledge of how birds fly, and of how

they call, and of how the weather changes with the moon.

Very many things a man might add to the list that I am making. Dew-pans are older than the language or the religion ; and the finding of water with a stick ; and the catching of that smooth animal, the mole ; and the building of flints into mortar, which if one does it in the old way (as you may see at Pevensey) the work lasts for ever, but if you do it in any new way it does not last ten years ; then there is the knowledge of planting during the crescent part of the month, but not before the new moon shows ; and there is the influence of the moon on cider, and to a less extent upon the brewing of ale ; and talking of ale, the knowledge of how ale should be drawn from the brewing just when a man can see his face without mist upon the surface of the hot brew. And there is the knowledge of how to bank rivers, which is called " throwing the rives " in the South, but in the Fen Land by some other name ; and how to bank them so that they do not silt, but scour themselves. There are these things and a thousand others. All are immemorial.

ON A VAN TROMP

ONCE there was a man who, having nothing else to do and being fond of that kind of thing, copied with a good deal of care on to a bit of wood the corner of a Dutch picture in one of the public galleries.

This man was not a good artist ; indeed, he was nothing but a humpbacked and very sensitive little squire with about £3,000 a year of his own and a great liking for intricate amusements. He was a pretty good mathematician and a tolerable fisherman. He knew an enormous amount about the Mohammedan conquest of Spain and he is, I believe, writing a book upon that subject. I hope he will, for nearly all history wants to be rewritten. Anyhow, he, as I have just said, did copy a corner of one of the Dutch pictures in one of the galleries. It was a Dutch picture of the seventeenth century ; and since the laws of this country are very complicated and the sanctions attached to them very terrible, I will not give the name of the original artist, but I will call him Van Tromp.

Van Tromps have always been recognized, and there was a moment about fifty years after the artist's death when they had a considerable vogue in the French Court. Monsieur, who was quite ignorant of such things, bought a couple, and there is a whole row of them in the little pavilion at Louveciennes. Van Tromp has something about him at once positive and elusive ; he is full of planes and values, and he interprets and renders, and the rest of it. Nay, he transfers !

About thirty years ago Mr. Mayor (of Hildesheim and London) thought it his duty to impress upon the public

how great Van Tromp was. This he did after taking thirteen Van Tromps in payment of a bad debt, and he succeeded. But the man I am writing about cared nothing for all this : he simply wanted to see how well he could imitate this corner of the picture, and he did it pretty well. He begrimed it and he rubbed at it, and then he tickled it up again with a knife, and then he smoked it, and then he put in some dirty whites which were vivid, and he played the fool with white of egg, and so forth, until he had the very tone and manner of the original ; and as he had done it on an old bit of wood it was exactly right, and he was very proud of the result. He got an old frame from near Long Acre and stuck it in, and then he took the thing home. He had done several things of this kind, imitating miniatures, and even enamels. It amused him. When he got home he sat looking at it with great pleasure for an hour or two ; he left the little thing on the table of his study and went to bed.

Here begins the story, and here, therefore, I must tell you what the subject of this corner of the picture was.

The subject of this corner of the picture which he had copied was a woman in a brown jacket and a red petticoat with big feet showing underneath, sitting on a tub and cutting up some vegetables. She had her hair bunched up like an onion, a fashion which, as we all know, appealed to the Dutch in the seventeenth century, or at any rate to the plebeian Dutch. I must also tell you the name of this squire before I go any further : his name was Hammer—Paul Hammer. He was unmarried.

He went to bed at eleven o'clock, and when he came down at eight o'clock he had his breakfast. He went into his study at nine o'clock, and was very much annoyed to find that some burglars had come in during the night

and had taken away a number of small objects which were not without value; and among them, what he most regretted, his little pastiche of the corner of the Van Tromp.

For some moments he stood filled with an acute anger and wishing that he knew who the burglars were and how to get at them; but the days passed, and though he asked everybody, and even gave some money to the police, he could not discover this. He put an advertisement into several newspapers, both London newspapers and local ones, saying that money would be given if the thing were restored, and pretty well hinting that no questions would be asked, but nothing came.

Meanwhile the burglars, whose names were Charles and Lothair Fernal, foreigners but English-speaking, had found some of their ill-acquired goods saleable, others unsaleable. They wanted a pound for the little picture in the frame, and this they could not get, and it was a bother haggling it about. Lothair Fernal thought of a good plan: he stopped at an inn on the third day of their peregrinations, had a good dinner with his brother, told the innkeeper that he could not pay the bill, and offered to leave the Old Master in exchange. When people do this it very often comes off, for the alternative is only the pleasure of seeing the man in gaol, whereas a picture is always a picture, and there is a gambler's chance of its turning up trumps. So the man grumbled and took the little thing. He hung it up in the best room of the inn, where he gave his richer customers food.

Thus it was that a young gentleman who had come down to ride in that neighbourhood, although he did not know any of the rich people round about, saw it one day, and on seeing it exclaimed loudly in an unknown tongue; but he

very rapidly repressed his emotion and simply told the innkeeper that he had taken a fancy to the daub and would give him thirty shillings for it.

The innkeeper, who had read in the newspapers of how pictures of the utmost value are sold by fools for a few pence, said boldly that his price was twenty pounds; whereupon the young gentleman went out gloomily, and the innkeeper thought that he must have made a mistake, and was for three hours depressed. But in the fourth hour again he was elated, for the young gentleman came back with twenty pounds, not even in notes but in gold, paid it down, and took away the picture. Then again, in the fifth hour was the innkeeper a little depressed, but not as much as before, for it struck him that the young gentleman must have been very eager to act in such a fashion, and that perhaps he could have got as much as twenty-one pounds by holding out and calling it guineas.

The young gentleman telegraphed to his father (who lived in Wimbledon but who did business in Bond Street) saying that he had got hold of a Van Tromp which looked like a study for the big "Eversley" Van Tromp in the Gallery, and he wanted to know what his father would give for it. His father telegraphed back inviting him to spend one whole night under the family roof. This the young man did, and, though it wrung the old father's heart to have to do it, by the time he had seen the young gentleman's find (or *trouvaille* as he called it) he had given his offspring a cheque for five hundred pounds. Whereupon the young gentleman left and went back to do some more riding, an exercise of which he was passionately fond, and to which he had trained several quiet horses.

The father wrote to a certain lord of his acquaintance who was very fond of Van Tromps, and offered him this

replica or study, in some ways finer than the original, but he said it must be a matter for private negotiation; so he asked for an appointment, and the lord, who was a tall, red-faced man with a bluff manner, made an appointment for nine o'clock next morning, which was rather early for Bond Street. But money talks, and they met. The lord was very well dressed, and when he talked he folded his hands (which had gloves on them) over the knob of his stick and pressed his stick firmly upon the ground. It was a way he had. But it did not frighten the old gentleman who did business in Bond Street, and the long and short of it was that the lord did not get the picture until he had paid three thousand guineas—not pounds, mind you. For this sum the picture was to be sent round to the lord's house, and so it was, and there it would have stayed but for a very curious accident. The lord had put the greater part of his money into a company which was developing the resources of the South Shetland Islands, and by some miscalculation or other the expense of this experiment proved larger than the revenues obtainable from it. His policy, as I need hardly tell you, was to hang on, and so he did, because in the long run the property must pay. And so it would if they could have gone on shelling out for ever, but they could not and so the whole affair was wound up and the lord lost a great deal of money.

Under these circumstances he bethought him of the toiling millions who never see a good picture and who have no more vivid appetite than the hunger for good pictures. He therefore lent his collection of Van Tromps with the least possible delay to a public gallery, and for many years they hung there, while the lord lived in great anxiety, but with a sufficient income for his needs in the delightful scenery of the Pennines at some distance from a railway

station, surrounded by his tenants. At last even these—the tenants, I mean—were not sufficient, and a gentleman in the Government who knew the value of Van Tromps proposed that these Van Tromps should be bought for the nation; but a lot of cranks made a frightful row, both in Parliament and out of it, so that the scheme would have fallen through had not one of the Van Tromps—to wit, that little copy of a corner which was obviously a replica of or a study for the best-known of the Van Tromps—been proclaimed false quite suddenly by a gentleman who doubted its authenticity; whereupon everybody said that it was not genuine except three people who really counted, and these included the gentleman who had recommended the purchase of the Van Tromps by the nation. So enormous was the row upon the matter that the picture reached the very pinnacle of fame, and an Australian then travelling in England was determined to get that Van Tromp for himself, and did.

This Australian was a very simple man, good and kind and childlike, and frightfully rich. When he had got the Van Tromp he carried it about with him, and at the country houses where he stopped he used to pull it out and show it to people. It happened that among other country houses he stopped once at the hunchback squire's, whose name, as you will remember, was Mr. Hammer, and he showed him the Van Tromp one day after dinner.

Now Mr. Hammer was by this time an old man, and he had ceased to care much for the things of this world. He had suffered greatly, and he had begun to think about religion; also he had made a good deal of money in Egyptians (for all this was before the slump). And he was pretty well ashamed of his pastiches; so, one way and another, the seeing of that picture did not have the effect

upon him which you might have expected ; for you, the reader, have read this story in five minutes (if you have had the patience to get so far), but he Mr. Hammer, had been changing and changing for years, and I tell you he did not care a dump what happened to the wretched thing. Only when the Australian, who was good and simple and kind and hearty, showed him the picture and asked him proudly to guess what he had given for it, then Mr. Hammer looked at him with a look in his eyes full of that mortal sadness which accompanies irremediable despair.

"I do not know," he answered gently and with a sob in his voice.

"I paid for that picture," said the Australian, in the accent and language of his native clime, "no less a sum than £7,500 . . . and I'd pay it again to-morrow!" Saying this, the Australian hit the table with the palm of his hand in a manner so manly that an aged retainer who was putting coals upon the fire allowed the coal-scuttle to drop.

But Mr. Hammer, ruminating in his mind all the accidents and changes and adventures of human life, its complexity, its unfulfilled desires, its fading but not quite perishable ideals, well knowing how men are made happy and how unhappy, ventured on no reply. Two great tears gathered in his eyes, and he would have shed them, perhaps to be profusely followed by more—he was nearly breaking down—when he looked up and saw on the wall opposite him seven pastiches which he had made in the years gone by. There was a Titian and a George Morland, a Chardin, two cows after Cooper, and an impressionist picture after some Frenchman whose name he had forgotten.

"You like pictures?" he said to the Australian, the tears still standing in his eyes.

"I do!" said the Australian with conviction.

"Will you let me give you these?" said Mr. Hammer.

The Australian protested that such things could not be allowed, but he was a simple man, and at last he consented, for he was immensely pleased.

"It is an ungracious thing to make conditions," said Mr. Hammer, "and I won't make any, only I *should* be pleased if, in your island home . . ."

"I don't live on an island," said the Australian.

Mr. Hammer remembered the map of Australia, with the water all round it, but he was too polite to argue.

"No, of course not," he said; "you live on the mainland; I forgot. But anyhow, I *should* be so pleased if you would promise me to hang them all together, these pictures with your Van Tromp, all in a line! I really should be so pleased!"

"Why, certainly," said the Australian, a little bewildered; "I will do so, Mr. Hammer, if it can give you any pleasure."

"The fact is," said Mr. Hammer, in a breaking voice, "I had that picture once, and I intended it to hang side by side with these."

It was in vain that the Australian, on hearing this, poured out self-reproaches, offered with an expansion of soul to restore it and then more prudently attempted a negotiation. Mr. Hammer resolutely shook his head.

"I am an old man," he said, "and I have no heirs; it is not for me to take, but to give, and if you will do what an old man begs of you, and accept what I offer; if you will do more and of your courtesy keep all these things together which were once familiar to me, it will be enough reward."

The next day, therefore, the Australian sailed off to his

distant continental home, carrying with him not only the Chardin, the Titian, the Cooper, the impressionist picture, and the rest, but also the Van Tromp. And three months after they all hung in a row in the great new copper room at Warra-Mugga. What happened to them later on, and how they were all sold together as "the Warra-Mugga Collection," I will tell you when I have the time and you the patience. Farewell.

ON A PIECE OF ROPE

THE other day as I was sailing down channel at dawn I contemplated a piece of rope (which was my only companion) and considered how many things attached to it, and of what sort these were.

I considered in the first place (as it has become my unhappy custom to do about most things) how mighty a theme this piece of rope would be for the modern rubbish, for the modern abandonment of common sense. I considered how many thousand people would, in connexion with that bit of rope, write that man had developed it through countless ages of upward striving from the first dim savage regions where some half-apelike creature first twisted grass, to the modern factory of Lord Ropemaker-in-chief, which adorns some Midland Hell to-day. I considered how people made up history of that kind entirely out of their heads and how it sold by the waggon-load. I considered how the other inventions which I had seen arise with my own eyes had always come suddenly, with a burst, unexpectedly, from the oddest quarters. I considered how not even this glaring experience was of the least use in preventing fools from talking folly.

Next I considered, as I watched that bit of rope, the curious historical fact of anonymity. Someone first thought out the bowline knot. Who was it? He never left a record. It seems that he desired to leave none. There would appear to be only two kinds of men who care about leaving a record of themselves: artists and soldiers. Innumerable other creators since the world began are content, it would seem, with creation and despise fame.

I have often wondered, for instance, who invented forming fours. I very much doubt his being a soldier. Certainly he was not a poet. If he had been a soldier he would not have let you forget him in a hurry—and as for poets, they are good for nothing and could no more invent a useful thing than fly.

Note you, that forming fours is something which must have been invented at one go. There is no "Development" about it. It is a simple, immediate and revolutionary trick. It was not—and then it was. Note you also that until the trick of forming fours was discovered, no conversion from line into column was possible, and therefore no quick handling of men. So with knots and so with splicing. There are, indeed, one or two knots that have names of men attached to them. There is Walker's knot, for instance. But Walker (if Walker it was who invented it) made no great effort to perpetuate his fame, and all the common useful knots without which civilization could not go on, and on which the State depends, were modestly given to mankind as a Christian man, now dead, used to give his charity! without advertisement.

And this consideration of knots led me to another, which was of those things which had been done with ropes and which without ropes would never have happened. The sailing of the sea, the execution of countless innocent men, and now and then, by accident, of somebody who really deserved death: The tying up of bundles, which is the solid foundation of all trade: The lasso for the catching of beasts: The hobbling of horses: The strengthening of man through pulleys: The casting of bridges over chasms: The sending of great messages to beleagured cities: The escapes of kings and heroes. All these would not have been but for ropes.

As I looked at the rope I further considered how strange it was that ropes had never been worshipped. Men have worshipped the wall, and the post, and the sun, and the house. They have worshipped their food and their drink. They have, you may say, ceremonially worshipped their clothes; they have worshipped their headgear especially, crowns, mitres, ta-ra-ras; and they have worshipped the music which they have created. . But I never heard of anyone worshipping a rope. Nor have I ever heard of a rope being made a symbol. I can recollect but one case in which it appears in a coat-of-arms, and that is, I think, in the case of the County or City of Chester, where, as I seem to remember, the Chester knot is emblazoned. But no one used it that I can remember in the Crusades, when all coats-of-arms were developing. And this is odd, for they used every other conceivable thing—windmills, spurs, boots, roses, staffs, waves of the sea, the crescent moon, lions and leopards and even the elephant, and black men's heads, birds, horses, unicorns, griffons, jolly little dogs, chess boards, eagles—every conceivable thing human or imaginary they pressed into service; but no ropes.

One would have thought that the rope would have been a basis of measurement, but there are only two ways in which it comes in for so obvious a purpose, and one of these is lost. There was the old Norman *hrap*, which was vague enough, and there is the cable, the tenth of a sea mile. But the rope does not come into any other measurement; for you cannot count the knots on a log line as a form of measurement with ropes. The measurement itself is not drawn from the rope but from geographical degrees.

Further, I considered the rope (as it lay there) on its literary side. No one has written verses to ropes. There is one verse about ropes, or mainly about ropes in a chaunty,

but I do not think there is any poem dedicated to ropes and dealing mainly with ropes. They are about the only thing upon which verse has not been accumulated—bad verse—for centuries.

Yet the rope has one very important place in literature which is not recognized. It is this: that ropes more than any other subject are, I think, a test of a man's power of exposition in prose. If you can describe clearly without a diagram the proper way of making this or that knot, then you are a master of the English tongue. You are not only a master—you are a sign, a portent, a new discoverer, an exception among your fellow men, a unique fellow. For no one yet in this world surely has attained to lucidity in this most difficult branch of all expression. I find over and over again in the passages of those special books which talk of ropes, such language as—"This is a very useful knot and is made as follows:—a bight is taken in the standing apart and is then run over right handedly, that is with the sun or, again, the hands of a watch (only backward), and then under the running part and so through both times and hauled tight by the free end." But if any man should seek to save his life on a dark night in a sudden gust of wind by this description he would fail: he would drown.

Take the simplest of them. Take the Clove Hitch. Write a sentence in English which will explain (without a picture) how to cast a Clove Hitch. I do not think you will succeed.

Talking of this literary side of ropes, see how the rope has accumulated, like everything else, a vast army of technical terms, a whole regiment of words which are its family and of which it is very jealous. People who write of ropes are hardly able to keep off these words although they mean

nothing to the reader and are but a darkening and a confusion. There is stranding and half-stranding and there is parcelling, serving and whipping, and crowning and all the rest of it. How came such words there? Who thought them to the point? On what possible metaphors were they founded? In nearly all other groups of technical words you can trace the origin, but here you cannot. Nor can you find the origin of the names for all the hundred things that are made of ropes. Why is a gasket called a gasket? Why is a grommet called a grommet? Why is a true lover's-knot called a true lover's-knot? or a tack a tack? Now and then there is a glimmering of sense. Halyard is obvious and sheet is explicable. Outhaul and downhaul might be Greek or German so plainly do they reveal their make-up. But what are you to make of bobstay, parrel, runner and shroud? Why are ratlines ratlines? What possible use could they be to a rat? They are no good for *leaving* a sinking ship, though excellent for running up out of the rising water. "Springs" I half understand, but whence in the name of Chelsea came "painter"? Reef points might pass. That is if you admit reef—which, I suppose, is the same as "reave" and "rove"—but, great heavens, where did they get "ear-rings"—and why do you "mouse" hooks, and what have cats to do with anchors?

A ship is a little world, a little universe, and it has a language of its own, which disdains the land and its reasons.

THE CROOKED STREETS

WHY do they pull down and do away with the Crooked Streets, I wonder, which are my delight, and hurt no man living ?

Every day the wealthier nations are pulling down one or another in their capitals and their great towns : they do not know why they do it ; neither do I.

It ought to be enough, surely, to drive the great broad ways which commerce needs and which are the life-channels of a modern city, without destroying all the history and all the humanity in between : the islands of the past. For, note you, the Crooked Streets are packed with human experience and reflect in a lively manner all the chances and misfortunes and expectations and domesticity and wonderment of men. One marks a boundary, another the kennel of an ancient stream, a third the track some animal took to cross a field hundreds upon hundreds of years ago ; another is the line of an old defence, another shows where a rich man's garden stopped long before the first ancestor one's family can trace was born ; a garden now all houses, and its owner who took delight in it turned to be a printed name.

Leave men alone in their cities, pester them not with the futilities of great governments, nor with the fads of too powerful men, and they will build you Crooked Streets of their very nature as moles throw up the little mounds or bees construct their combs. There is no ancient city but glories, or has gloried, in a whole foison and multitude of Crooked Streets. There is none, however wasted and swept by power, which, if you leave it alone to natural

things, will not breed Crooked Streets in less than a hundred years and keep them for a thousand more.

I know a dead city called Timgad, which the sand or the barbarians of the Atlas overwhelmed fourteen centuries ago. It lies between the desert and the Algerian fields, high up upon a mountain-side. Its columns stand. Even its fountains are apparent, though their waterways are choked. It has a great forum or market-place, all flagged and even, and the ruined walls of its houses mark its emplacement on every side. All its streets are straight, set out with a line, and by this you may judge how a Roman town lay when the last order of Rome sank into darkness.

Well, take any other town which has not thus been mummified and preserved but has lived through the intervening time, and you will find that man, active, curious, intense, in all the fruitful centuries of Christian time has endowed them with Crooked Streets, which kind of streets are the most native to Christian men. So it is with Arles, so it is with Nîmes, so it is with old Rome itself, and so it is with the City of London, on which by a special Providence the curse of the Straight Street has never fallen, so that it is to this day a labyrinth of little lanes. It was intended after the Great Fire to set it all out in order with "piazas" and boulevards and the rest—but the English temper was too strong for any such nonsense, and the streets and the courts took to the natural lines which suit us best.

The Renaissance indeed everywhere began this plague of vistas and of avenues. It was determined three centuries ago to rebuild Paris as regular as a chessboard and nothing but money saved the town—or rather the lack of money. You may to this day see in a square called the "Place des Vosges" what was intended. But when they had driven

their Straight Street two hundred yards or so the exchequer ran dry, and thus was old Paris saved. But in the last seventy years they have hurt it badly again. I have no quarrel with what is regal and magnificent, with splendid ways of a hundred feet or more, with great avenues and lines of palaces ; but why should they pull down my nest beyond the river—Straw Street and Rat Street and all those winding belts round the little Church of St. Julien the Poor, where they say that Dante studied and where Danton in the madness of his grief dug up his dead love from the earth on his returning from the wars ?

Crooked Streets will never tire a man, and each will have its character, and each will have a soul of its own. To proceed from one to another is like travelling in a multitude or mixing with a number of friends. In a town of Crooked Streets it is natural that one should be the Moneylender's Street and another that of the Burglars, and a third that of the Politicians, and so forth through all the trades and professions.

Then also, how much better are not the beauties of a town seen from Crooked Streets ! Consider those old Dutch towns where you suddenly come round a corner upon great stretches of salt water, or those towns of Central France which from one street and then another show you the Gothic in a hundred ways.

It is as it should be when you have the back of Chartres Cathedral towering up above you from between and above two houses gabled and almost meeting. It is what the builders meant when one comes out from such fissures into the great Place, the parvis of the cathedral, like a sailor from a river into the sea. Not that certain buildings were not made particularly for wide approaches and splendid roads, but that these, when they are the rule,

sterilize and kill a town. Napoleon was wise enough when he designed that there should lead all up beyond the Tiber to St. Peter's a vast imperial way. But the modern nondescript horde, which has made Rome its prey, is very ill advised to drive those new Straight Streets foolishly, emptily, with mean façades of plaster and great gaps that will not fill.

You will have noted in your travels how the Crooked Streets gather names to themselves which are as individual as they, and which are bound up with them as our names are with all our own human reality and humour. Thus I bear in mind certain streets of the town where I served as a soldier. There was the Street of the Three Little Heaps of Wheat, the Street of the Trumpeting Moor, the Street of the False Heart, and an exceedingly pleasant street called "Who Grumbles at It?" and another short one called "The Street of the Devil in his Haste," and many others.

From time to time those modern town councillors from whom Heaven has wisely withdrawn all immoderate sums of money, and who therefore have not the power to take away my Crooked Streets and put Straight ones in their places, change old names to new ones. Every such change indicates some snobbery of the time: some little battle exaggerated to be a great thing; some public fellow or other, in Parliament or what not; some fad of the learned or of the important in their day.

Once I remember seeing in an obscure corner a twist of dear old houses built before George III was king, and on the corner of this row was painted "Kipling Street: late Nelson Street."

Upon another occasion I went to a little Norman market town up among the hills, where one of the smaller squares

was called "The Place of the Three Mad Nuns," and when I got there after so many years and was beginning to renew my youth I was struck all of a heap to see a great enamelled blue and white affair upon the walls. They had renamed the triangle. They had called it "The Place Victor Hugo" !

However, all you who love Crooked Streets, I bid you lift up your hearts. There is no power on earth that can make man build Straight Streets for long. It is a bad thing, as a general rule, to prophesy good or to make men feel comfortable with the vision of a pleasant future ; but in this case I am right enough. The Crooked Streets will certainly return.

Let me boldly borrow a quotation which I never saw until the other day, and that in another man's work, but which, having once seen it, I shall retain all the days of my life.

"*Oh, passi graviora, dabit Deus his quoque finem,*" or words to that effect. I can never be sure of a quotation, still less of scansion, and anyhow, as I am deliberately stealing it from another man, if I have changed it so much the better.

THE DEPARTURE

ONCE, in Barbary, I grew tired of unusual things, especially of palms, and desired to return to Europe and the things I knew ; so I went down from the hills to the sea coast, and when after two days I had reached the railway, I took a train for Algiers and reached that port at evening.

From Algiers it is possible to go at once and for almost any sum one chooses to any part of the world. The town is on a sharp slope of a theatre of hills, and in the quiet harbour below it there are all sorts of ships, but mostly steamships, moored with their sterns towards the quay. For there is no tide here, and the ships can lie quite still.

I sat upon a wall of the upper town and considered how each of these ships was going to some different place and how pleasant it was to roam about the world. Behind the ships, along the stone quays, were a great number of wooden huts, of offices built into archways, of little houses, booths, and dens, in each of which you could take your passage to some place or other.

"Now," said I to myself, "now is the time to be free." For one never feels master of oneself unless one is obeying no law, plan, custom, trend, or necessity, but simply spreading out at ease and occupying the world. In this also Aristotle was misled by fashion, or was ill-informed by some friend of his, or was, perhaps, lying for money when he said that liberty was obedience to a self-made law ; for the most distant hint of law is odious to liberty. True, it is more free to obey a law of one's own making than of some one else's ; just as if a man should give him-

self a punch in the eye it would be less hurtful and far less angering than one given by a passer-by; yet to suffer either would not be a benefit of freedom. Liberty cannot breathe where the faintest odour of regulation is to be discovered, but only in that ether whose very nature is largeness. Oh! Diviner Air! how few have drunk you, and in what deep draughts have I!

I had a great weight of coined, golden, metallic money all loose in my pocket. There was no call upon me nor any purpose before me. I spent an hour looking down upon the sea and the steamships, and taking my pick out of all the world.

One thing, however, guided me, which was this: that desire, to be satisfied at all, must be satisfied at once; and of the many new countries I might seek that would most attract me whose ship was starting soonest. So I looked round for mooring cables in the place of anchor chains, for Blue Peter, for smoke from funnels, for little boats coming and going, and for all that shows a steamboat to be off; when I saw, just behind a large new boat in such a condition of bustle, a sign in huge yellow letters staring on a bright black ground, which said, "To the Balearic Islands, eight shillings"; underneath, in smaller yellow letters, was written: "Gentlemen The Honourable Travellers are warned that they must pay for any food they consume." When I had read this notice I said to myself: "I will go to the Balearic Islands, of which the rich have never heard. I, poor and unencumbered, will go and visit these remote places, which have in their time received all the influences of the world, and which yet have no history; for I am tired of this Africa, where so many men are different from me." As I said this to myself I saw a little picture in my mind of three small

islands standing in the middle of the sea, quite alone, and inhabited by happy men ; but this picture, as it always is with such pictures, was not at all the same as what I saw when next morning the islands rose along the north to which we steered.

I went down to the quay by some large stone steps which an Englishman had built many years ago, and I entered the office above which this great sign was raised. Within was a tall man of doubtful race, smoking a cigarette, made of loose paper, and gazing kindly at the air. He was full of reveries. Of this man I asked when the boat would be starting. He told me it started in half an hour, a little before the setting of the sun. So I bought a ticket for eight shillings, upon which it was clearly printed in two languages that I had bound myself to all manner of things by the purchase, and especially that I might not go below, but must sit upon deck all night ; nevertheless, I was glad to hold that little bit of printed prose, for it would enable me to reach the Balearic Islands, which for all other men are names in a dream. I then went up into the town of Algiers, and was careful to buy some ham from a Jew, some wine from a Mohammedan, and some bread and chocolate from a very indifferent Christian. After that I got aboard. As I came over the side I heard the sailors, stokers, and people all talking to each other in low tones, and I at once recognized the tongue called Catalan.

I had heard this sort of Latin in many places, some lonely and some populous. I had heard it once from a chemist at Perpignan who dressed a wound of mine, and this was the first time I heard it. Very often after in the valleys of the Pyrenees, in the Cerdagne, and especially in Andorra, hundreds of men had spoken to me in Catalan. At Urgel, that notable city where there is only one shop

and where the streets are quite narrow and Moorish, a woman and six or seven men had spoken Catalan to me for nearly one hour : it was in a cellar surrounded by great barrels, and I remember it well. So, also, on the River Noguera, coming up again into the hills, a girl who took the toll at the wooden bridge had spoken Catalan to me. But none of these had I ever answered so that they could understand, and on this account I was very grieved to hear the Catalan tongue, though I remembered that if I spoke to them with ordinary Spanish words or in French with a strong Southern accent they would usually have some idea of what I was saying.

As the evening fell the cables were slipped without songs, and with great dignity, rapidity, and order the ship was got away.

I knew a man once, a seafaring man, a Scotchman, with whom I travelled on a very slow old boat in the Atlantic, who told me that the Northern people of Europe were bravest in an unexpected danger, but the Southern in a danger long foreseen. He said he had known many of both kinds, and had served under them and commanded them. He said that in sudden accident the Northerner was the more reliable man, but that if an act of great danger had to be planned and coolly achieved, then the Southerner was strongest in doing what he had to do. He said that in taking the ground he would rather have a Northern, but in bringing in a short ship a Southern crew.

He was a man who observed closely, and never said a thing because he had read it. Indeed, he did not read, and he had in a little hanging shelf above his bunk only four or five tattered books, and even these were magazines. I remembered his testimony now as I watched these Catalans letting the ship go free, and I believed it,

comparing it with history and the things I had myself seen. They did everything with such regularity and so silently that it was a different deck from what one would have had in the heave of the Channel. With Normans or Bretons, or Cornishmen or men of Kent, but especially with men from London river, there would have been all sorts of cursing and bellowing, and they could not have touched a rope without throwing themselves into attitudes of violence. But these men took the sea quite quietly, nor could you tell from their faces which was rich and which was poor.

It was not till the ship was out throbbing swiftly over the smooth sea and darkness had fallen that they began to sing. Then those of them who were not working gathered together with a stringed instrument forward and sang of pity and of death. One of them said to me, "Knight, can your grace sing?" I told him that I could sing, certainly, but that my singing was unpleasing, and that I only knew foreign songs. He said that singing was a great solace, and desired to hear a song of my own country. So I sang them a song out of Sussex, to which they listened in deep silence, and when it was concluded their leader snapped and twanged at the strings again and began another song about the riding of horses in the hills.

So we passed the short night until the sky upon our quarter grew faintly pale and the little wind that rises before morning awakened the sea.

G. K. CHESTERTON

THE SURRENDER OF A COCKNEY

EVERY man, though he were born in the very belfry of Bow and spent his infancy climbing among chimneys, has waiting for him somewhere a country house which he has never seen ; but which was built for him in the very shape of his soul. It stands patiently waiting to be found, knee-deep in orchards of Kent or mirrored in pools of Lincoln ; and when the man sees it he remembers it, though he has never seen it before. Even I have been forced to confess this at last, who am a Cockney, if ever there was one, a Cockney not only on principle, but with savage pride. I have always maintained, quite seriously, that the Lord is not in the wind or thunder of the waste, but, if anywhere, in the still small voice of Fleet Street. I sincerely maintain that Nature-worship is more morally dangerous than the most vulgar man-worship of the cities ; since it can easily be perverted into the worship of an impersonal mystery, carelessness, or cruelty. Thoreau would have been a jollier fellow if he had devoted himself to a greengrocer instead of to greens. Swinburne would have been a better moralist if he had worshipped a fish-monger instead of worshipping the sea. I prefer the philosophy of bricks and mortar to the philosophy of turnips. To call a man a turnip may be playful, but is seldom respectful. But when we wish to pay emphatic honour to a man, to praise the firmness of his nature, the squareness of his conduct, the strong humility with which he is interlocked with his equals in silent mutual support, then we invoke the nobler Cockney metaphor, and call him a brick.

But, despite all these theories, I have surrendered ; I have struck my colours at sight ; at a mere glimpse through the opening of a hedge. I shall come down to living in the country, like any common Socialist or Simple Lifer. I shall end my days in a village, in the character of the Village Idiot, and be a spectacle and a judgment to mankind. I have already learnt the rustic manner of leaning upon a gate ; and I was thus gymnastically occupied at the moment when my eye caught the house that was made for me. It stood well back from the road, and was built of a good yellow brick ; it was narrow for its height, like the tower of some Border robber ; and over the front door was carved in large letters, " 1908." That last burst of sincerity, that superb scorn of antiquarian sentiment, overwhelmed me finally. I closed my eyes in a kind of ecstasy. My friend (who was helping me to lean on the gate) asked me with some curiosity what I was doing.

" My dear fellow," I said, with emotion, " I am bidding farewell to forty-three hansom cabmen."

" Well," he said, " I suppose they would think this county rather outside the radius."

" Oh, my friend," I cried brokenly, " how beautiful London is ! Why do they only write poetry about the country ? I could turn every lyric cry into Cockney."

' My heart leaps up when I behold
A sky-sign in the sky,'

as I observed in a volume which is too little read, founded on the older English poets. You never saw my ' Golden Treasury Regilded ; or, The Classics Made Cockney '—it contained some fine lines.

' O Wild West End, thou breath of London's being,'

The evening breeze freshened among the little tossing trees of that lane, and the purple evening clouds piled up and darkened behind my Country Seat, the house that belonged to me, making, by contrast, its yellow bricks gleam like gold. At last my friend said: "To cut it short, then, you mean that you will live in the country because you won't like it. What on earth will you do here; dig up the garden?"

"Dig!" I answered, in honourable scorn. "Dig! Do work at my Country Seat; no, thank you. When I find a Country Seat, I sit in it. And for your other objection, you are quite wrong. I do not dislike the country, but I like the town more. Therefore the art of happiness, certainly suggests that I should live in the country and think about the town. Modern Nature-worship is all upside down. Trees and fields ought to be the ordinary things; terraces and temples ought to be extraordinary. I am on the side of the man who lives in the country and wants to go to London. I abominate and abjure the man who lives in London and wants to go to the country; I do it with all the more heartiness because I am that sort of man myself. We must learn to love London again, as rustics love it. Therefore (I quote again from the great Cockney version of *The Golden Treasury*)—

'Therefore, ye gas-pipes, ye asbestos stoves,
Forbode not any severing of our loves.
I have relinquished but your earthly sight,
To hold you dear in a more distant way.
I'll love the 'buses lumbering through the wet,
Even more than when I lightly tripped as they.
The grimy colour of the London clay
Is lovely yet.'

because I have found the house where I was really born; the tall and quiet house from which I can see London afar off, as the miracle of man that it is."

ON LYING IN BED

LYING in bed would be an altogether perfect and supreme experience if only one had a coloured pencil long enough to draw on the ceiling. This, however, is not generally a part of the domestic apparatus on the premises. I think myself that the thing might be managed with several pails of Aspinall and a broom. Only if one worked in a really sweeping and masterly way, and laid on the colour in great washes, it might drip down again on one's face in floods of rich and mingled colour like some strange fairy rain ; and that would have its disadvantages. I am afraid it would be necessary to stick to black and white in this form of artistic composition. To that purpose, indeed, the white ceiling would be of the greatest possible use ; *in fact it is the only use I think of a white ceiling being put to.*

But for the beautiful experiment of lying in bed I might never have discovered it. For years I have been looking for some blank spaces in a modern house to draw on. Paper is much too small for any really allegorical design ; as Cyrano de Bergerac says : "*Il me faut des géants.*" But when I tried to find these fine clear spaces in the modern rooms such as we all live in I was continually disappointed. I found an endless pattern and complication of small objects hung like a curtain of fine links between me and my desire. I examined the walls ; I found them to my surprise to be already covered with wall-paper, and I found the wall-paper to be already covered with very uninteresting images, all bearing a ridiculous resemblance to each other. I could not understand why one arbitrary symbol

(a symbol apparently entirely devoid of any religious or philosophical significance) should thus be sprinkled all over my nice walls like a sort of small-pox. The Bible must be referring to wall-papers, I think, when it says "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do." I found the Turkey carpet a mass of unmeaning colours, rather like the Turkish Empire, or like the sweetmeat called Turkish Delight. I do not exactly know what Turkish Delight really is; but I suppose it is Macedonian Mas-sacres. Everywhere that I went forlornly with my pencil or my paint brush, I found that others had unaccountably been before me, spoiling the walls, the curtains, and the furniture with their childish and barbaric designs.

* * * * *

Nowhere did I find a really clear space for sketching until this occasion when I prolonged beyond the proper limit the process of lying on my back in bed. Then the light of that white heaven broke upon my vision, that breadth of mere white which is indeed almost the definition of Paradise, since it means purity and also means freedom. But alas! like all heavens now that it is seen it is found to be unattainable; it looks more austere and more distant than the blue sky outside the window. For my proposal to paint on it with the bristly end of a broom has been discouraged—never mind by whom; by a person debarred from all political rights—and even my minor proposal to put the other end of the broom into the kitchen fire and turn it into charcoal has not been conceded. Yet I am certain that it was from persons in my position that all the original inspiration came for covering the ceilings of palaces and cathedrals with a riot of fallen angels or

Misers get up early in the morning ; and burglars, I am informed, get up the night before. It is the great peril of our society that all its mechanism may grow more fixed while its spirit grows more fickle. A man's minor actions and arrangements ought to be free, flexible, creative ; the things that should be unchangeable are his principles, his ideals. But with us the reverse is true ; our views change constantly ; but our lunch does not change. Now, I should like men to have strong and rooted conceptions, but as for their lunch, let them have it sometimes in the garden, sometimes in bed, sometimes on the roof, sometimes in the top of a tree. Let them argue from the same first principles, but let them do it in a bed, or a boat, or a balloon. This alarming growth of good habits really means a too great emphasis on those virtues which mere custom can ensure, it means too little emphasis on those virtues which custom can never quite ensure, sudden and splendid virtues of inspired pity or of inspired candour. If ever that abrupt appeal is made to us we may fail. A man can get used to getting up at five o'clock in the morning. A man cannot very well get used to being burnt for his opinions ; the first experiment is commonly fatal. Let us pay a little more attention to these possibilities of the heroic and the unexpected. I dare say that when I get out of this bed I shall do some deed of an almost terrible virtue.

For those who study the great art of lying in bed there is one emphatic caution to be added. Even for those who can do their work in bed (like journalists), still more for those whose work cannot be done in bed (as, for example, the professional harpooners of whales), it is obvious that the indulgence must be very occasional. But that is not the caution I mean. The caution is this : if you do lie in

THE APPETITE OF EARTH

I WAS walking the other day in a kitchen garden, which I find has somehow got attached to my premises, and I was wondering why I liked it. After a prolonged spiritual self-analysis I came to the conclusion that I like a kitchen garden because it contains things to eat. I do not mean that a kitchen garden is ugly; a kitchen garden is often very beautiful. The mixture of green and purple on some monstrous cabbage is much subtler and grander than the mere freakish and theatrical splashing of yellow and violet on a pansy. Few of the flowers merely meant for ornament are so ethereal as a potato. A kitchen garden is as beautiful as an orchard; but why is it that the word "orchard" sounds as beautiful as the word "flower-garden," and yet also sounds more satisfactory? I suggest again my extraordinarily dark and delicate discovery: that it contains things to eat.

The cabbage is a solid; it can be approached from all sides at once; it can be realized by all senses at once. Compared with that the sunflower, which can only be seen, is a mere pattern, a thing painted on a flat wall. Now, it is this sense of the solidity of things that can only be uttered by the metaphor of eating. To express the cubic content of a turnip, you must be all round it at once. The only way to get all round a turnip at once is to eat the turnip. I think any poetic mind that has loved solidity, the thickness of trees, the squareness of stones, the firmness of clay, must have sometimes wished that they were things to eat. If only brown peat tasted as good as it looks; if only white firwood were digestible! We talk rightly of giving

stones for bread : but there are in the Geological Museum certain rich crimson marbles, certain split stones of blue and green, that make me wish my teeth were stronger.

Somebody staring into the sky with the same ethereal appetite declared that the moon was made of green cheese. I never could conscientiously accept the full doctrine. I am Modernist in this matter. That the moon is made of cheese I have believed from childhood ; and in the course of every month a giant (of my acquaintance) bites a big round piece out of it. This seems to me a doctrine that is above reason, but not contrary to it. But that the cheese is green seems to be in some degree actually contradicted by the senses and the reason ; first because if the moon were made of green cheese it would be inhabited ; and second because if it were made of green cheese it would be green. A blue moon is said to be an unusual sight ; but I cannot think that a green one is much more common. In fact, I think I have seen the moon looking like every other sort of cheese except a green cheese. I have seen it look exactly like a cream cheese : a circle of warm white upon a warm faint violet sky above a cornfield in Kent. I have seen it look very like a Dutch cheese, rising a dull red copper disk amid masts and dark waters at Honfleur. I have seen it look like an ordinary sensible Cheddar cheese in an ordinary sensible Prussian blue sky ; and I have once seen it so naked and ruinous-looking, so strangely lit up, that it looked like a Gruyère cheese, that awful volcanic cheese that has horrible holes in it, as if it had come in boiling unnatural milk from mysterious and unearthly cattle. But I have never yet seen the lunar cheese green ; and I incline to the opinion that the moon is not old enough. The moon, like *everything else*, will ripen by the end of the world ; and in the last days we shall see it taking on those volcanic sunset

colours, and leaping with that enormous and fantastic life.

But this is a parenthesis; and one perhaps slightly lacking in prosaic actuality. Whatever may be the value of the above speculations, the phrase about the moon and green cheese remains a good example of this imagery of eating and drinking on a large scale. The same huge fancy is in the phrase "if all the trees were bread and cheese," which I have cited elsewhere in this connection; and in that noble nightmare of a Scandinavian legend, in which Thor drinks the deep sea nearly dry out of a horn. In an essay like the present (first intended as a paper to be read before the Royal Society) one cannot be too exact; and I will concede that my theory of the gradual virescence of our satellite is to be regarded rather as an alternative theory than as a law finally demonstrated and universally accepted by the scientific world. It is a hypothesis that holds the field, as the scientists say of a theory when there is no evidence for it so far.

But the reader need be under no apprehension that I have suddenly gone mad, and shall start biting large pieces out of the trunks of trees; or seriously altering (by large semicircular mouthfuls) the exquisite outline of the mountains. This feeling for expressing a fresh solidity by the image of eating is really a very old one. So far from being a paradox of perversity, it is one of the oldest common-places of religion. If any one wandering about wants to have a good trick or test for separating the wrong idealism from the right, I will give him one on the spot. It is a mark of false religion that it is always trying to express concrete facts as abstract; it calls sex affinity; it calls wine alcohol; it calls brute starvation the economy problem. The test of true religion is that its energy drives

exactly the other way ; it is always trying to make men feel truths as facts ; always trying to make abstract things as plain and solid as concrete things ; always trying to make men, not merely admit the truth, but see, smell, handle, hear, and devour the truth. All great spiritual scriptures are full of the invitation not to test, but to taste ; not to examine, but to eat. Their phrases are full of living water and heavenly bread, mysterious manna and dreadful wine. Worldliness, and the polite society of the world, has despised this instinct of eating ; but religion has never despised it. When we look at a firm, fat, white cliff of chalk at Dover, I do not suggest that we should desire to eat it ; that would be highly abnormal. But I really mean that we should think it good to eat ; good for some one else to eat. For, indeed, some one else is eating it ; the grass that grows upon its top is devouring it silently, but, doubtless, with an uproarious appetite.

A PIECE OF CHALK

I REMEMBER one splendid morning, all blue and silver, in the summer holidays, when I reluctantly tore myself away from the task of doing nothing in particular, and put on a hat of some sort and picked up a walking-stick, and put six very bright-coloured chalks in my pocket. I then went into the kitchen (which, along with the rest of the house, belonged to a very square and sensible old woman in a Sussex village), and asked the owner and occupant of the kitchen if she had any brown paper. She had a great deal; in fact, she had too much; and she mistook the purpose and the rationale of the existence of brown paper. She seemed to have an idea that if a person wanted brown paper he must be wanting to tie up parcels; which was the last thing I wanted to do; indeed, it is a thing which I have found to be beyond my mental capacity. Hence she dwelt very much on the varying qualities of toughness and endurance in the material. I explained to her that I only wanted to draw pictures on it, and that I did not want them to endure in the least; and that from my point of view, therefore, it was a question not of tough consistency, but of responsive surface, a thing comparatively irrelevant in a parcel. When she understood that I wanted to draw she offered to overwhelm me with note-paper, apparently supposing that I did my notes and correspondence on old brown paper wrappers from motives of economy.

I then tried to explain the rather delicate logical shade, that I not only liked brown paper, but liked the quality of brownness in paper, just as I liked the quality of brownness

in October woods, or in beer, or in the peat-streams of the North. Brown paper represents the primal twilight of the first toil of creation, and with a bright-coloured chalk or two you can pick out points of fire in it, sparks of gold, and blood-red, and sea-green, like the first fierce stars that sprang out of divine darkness. All this I said (in an off-hand way) to the old woman ; and I put the brown paper in my pocket along with the chalks, and possibly other things. I suppose every one must have reflected how primeval and how poetical are the things that one carries in one's pocket ; the pocket-knife, for instance the type of all human tools, the infant of the sword. Once I planned to write a book of poems entirely about the things in my pocket. But I found it would be too long ; and the age of the great epics is past.

* * * * *

With my stick and my knife, my chalks and my brown paper, I went out on to the great downs. I crawled across those colossal contours that express the best quality of England, because they are at the same time soft and strong. The smoothness of them has the same meaning as the smoothness of great cart-horses, or the smoothness of the beech-tree ; it declares in the teeth of our timid and cruel theories that the mighty are merciful. As my eye swept the landscape, the landscape was as kindly as any of its cottages, but for power it was like an earthquake. The villages in the immense valley were safe, one could see, for centuries ; yet the lifting of the whole land was like the lifting of one enormous wave to wash them all away.

I crossed one swell of living turf after another, looking for a place to sit down and draw. Do not, for heaven's

sake, imagine I was going to sketch from Nature. I was going to draw devils and seraphim, and blind old gods that men worshipped before the dawn of right, and saints in robes of angry crimson, and seas of strange green, and all the sacred or monstrous symbols that look so well in bright colours on brown paper. They are much better worth drawing than Nature; also they are much easier to draw. When a cow came slouching by in the field next to me, a mere artist might have drawn it; but I always get wrong in the hind legs of quadrupeds. So I drew the soul of the cow; which I saw there plainly walking before me in the sunlight; and the soul was all purple and silver, and had seven horns and the mystery that belongs to all the beasts. But though I could not with a crayon get the best out of the landscape, it does not follow that the landscape was not getting the best out of me. And this, I think, is the mistake that people make about the old poets who lived before Wordsworth, and were supposed not to care very much about Nature because they did not describe it much.

They preferred writing about great men to writing about great hills; but they sat on the great hills to write it. They gave out much less about Nature, but they drank in, perhaps, much more. They painted the white robes of their holy virgins with the blinding snow, at which they had stared all day. They blazoned the shields of their paladins with the purple and gold of many heraldic sunsets. The greenness of a thousand green leaves clustered into the live green figure of Robin Hood. The blueness of a score of forgotten skies became the blue robes of the Virgin. The inspiration went in like sunbeams and came out like Apollo.

But as I sat scrawling these silly figures on the brown paper, it began to dawn on me, to my great disgust, that I had left one chalk, and that a most exquisite and essential chalk, behind. I searched all my pockets, but I could not find any white chalk. Now, those who are acquainted with all the philosophy (nay, religion) which is typified in the art of drawing on brown paper, know that white is positive and essential. I cannot avoid remarking here upon a moral significance. One of the wise and awful truths which this brown-paper art reveals, is this, that white is a colour. It is not a mere absence of colour; it is a shining and affirmative thing, as fierce as red, as definite as black. When (so to speak) your pencil grows red-hot, it draws roses; when it grows white-hot, it draws stars. And one of the two or three defiant verities of the best religious morality, of real Christianity for example, is exactly the same thing; the chief assertion of religious morality is that white is a colour. Virtue is not the absence of vices or the avoidance of moral dangers; virtue is a vivid and separate thing, like pain or a particular smell. Mercy does not mean not being cruel or sparing people revenge or punishment; it means a plain and positive thing like the sun, which one has either seen or not seen. Chastity does not mean abstention from sexual wrong; it means something flaming, like Joan of Arc. In a word, God paints in many colours; but He never paints so gorgeously, I had almost said so gaudily, as when He paints in white. In a sense our age has realized this fact, and expressed it in our sullen costume. For if it were really true that white was a blank and colourless thing, negative and non-committal, then white would be used instead of black and grey for the funeral dress of this pessimistic period. We should see city gentlemen in frock

coats of spotless silver satin, with top hats as white as wonderful arum lilies. Which is not the case.

Meanwhile I could not find my chalk.

* * * *

I sat on the hill in a sort of despair. There was no town nearer than Chichester at which it was even remotely probable that there would be such a thing as an artist's colourman. And yet, without white, my absurd little pictures would be as pointless as the world would be if there were no good people in it. I stared stupidly round, racking my brain for expedients. Then I suddenly stood up and roared with laughter, again and again, so that the cows stared at me and called a committee. Imagine a man in the Sahara regretting that he had no sand for his hour-glass. Imagine a gentleman in mid-ocean wishing that he had brought some salt water with him for his chemical experiments. I was sitting on an immense warehouse of white chalk. The landscape was made entirely out of white chalk. White chalk was piled mere miles until it met the sky. I stooped and broke a piece off the rock I sat on : it did not mark so well as the shop chalks do ; but it gave the effect. And I stood there in a trance of pleasure, realizing that this Southern England is not only a grand peninsula, and a tradition and a civilization ; it is something even more admirable. It is a piece of chalk.

out that he would rather have an elephant when he knows there are no elephants in the country. We may concede that a straw may break the camel's back, but we like to know that it really is the last straw and not the first.

I grant that those who have serious wrongs have a real right to grumble, so long as they grumble about something else. It is a singular fact that if they are sane they almost always do grumble about something else. To talk quite reasonably about your own quite real wrongs is the quickest way to go off your head. But people with great troubles talk about little ones, and the man who complains of the crumpled rose-leaf very often has his flesh full of the thorns. But if a man has commonly a very clear and happy daily life then I think we are justified in asking that he shall not make mountains out of molehills. I do not deny that molehills can sometimes be important. Small annoyances have this evil about them, that they can be more abrupt because they are more invisible; they cast no shadow before, they have no atmosphere. No one ever had a mystical premonition that he was going to tumble over a hassock. William III died by falling over a molehill; I do not suppose that with all his varied abilities he could have managed to fall over a mountain. But when all this is allowed for, I repeat that we may ask a happy man (not William III) to put up with pure inconveniences, and even make them part of his happiness. Of positive pain or positive poverty I do not here speak. I speak of those innumerable accidental limitations that are always falling across our path—bad weather, confinement to this or that house or room, failure of appointments or arrangements, waiting at railway stations, missing posts, finding unpunctuality when we want punctuality, or, what is worse, finding punctuality when we don't. It is of the poetic

This lonely leg on which I rest has all the simplicity of some Doric column. The students of architecture tell us that the only legitimate use of a column is to support weight. This column of mine fulfils its legitimate function. It supports weight. Being of an animal and organic consistency, it may even improve by the process, and during these few days that I am thus unequally balanced the helplessness or dislocation of the one leg may find compensation in the astonishing strength and classic beauty of the other leg. Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson in Mr. George Meredith's novel might pass by at any moment, and seeing me in the stork-like attitude would exclaim, with equal admiration and a more literal exactitude, "He has a leg." Notice how this famous literary phrase supports my contention touching this isolation of any admirable thing. Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson, wishing to make a clear and perfect picture of human grace, said that Sir Willoughby Patterne had a leg. She delicately glossed over and concealed the clumsy and offensive fact that he had really two legs. Two legs were superfluous and irrelevant, a reflection, and a confusion. Two legs would have confused Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson like two Monuments in London. That having had one good leg he should have another—this would be to use vain repetitions as the Gentiles do. She would have been as much bewildered by him as if he had been a centipede.

All pessimism has a secret optimism for its object. All surrender of life, all denial of pleasure, all darkness, all austerity, all desolation has for its real aim this separation of something so that it may be poignantly and perfectly enjoyed. I feel grateful for the slight sprain which has introduced this mysterious and fascinating division between one of my feet and the other. The way to love anything

is to realize that it might be lost. In one of my feet I can feel how strong and splendid a foot is ; in the other I can realize how very much otherwise it might have been. The moral of the thing is wholly exhilarating. This world and all our powers in it are far more awful and beautiful than we ever know until some accident reminds us. If you wish to perceive that limitless felicity, limit yourself if only for a moment. If you wish to realize how fearfully and wonderfully God's image is made, stand on one leg. If you want to realize the splendid vision of all visible things—wink the other eye.

THE BALLADE OF A STRANGE TOWN

MY friend and I, in fooling about Flanders, fell into a fixed affection for the town of Mechlin or Malines. Our rest there was so restful that we almost felt it as a home, and hardly strayed out of it.

We sat day after day in the market-place, under little trees growing in wooden tubs, and looked up at the noble converging lines of the Cathedral tower, from which the three riders from Ghent, in the poem, heard the bell which told them they were not too late. But we took as much pleasure in the people, in the little boys with open, flat Flemish faces and fur collars round their necks, making them look like burgomasters; or the women, whose prim, oval faces, hair strained tightly off the temples, and mouths at once hard, meek, and humorous exactly reproduce the late mediæval faces in Memling and Van Eyck.

But one afternoon, as it happened, my friend rose from under his little tree, and, pointing to a sort of toy train that was puffing smoke in one corner of the clear square, suggested that we should go by it. We got into the little train, which was meant really to take the peasants and their vegetables to and fro from their fields beyond the town, and the official came round to give us tickets. We asked him what place we should get to if we paid fivepence. The Belgians are not a romantic people, and he asked us (with a lamentable mixture of Flemish coarseness and French rationalism) where we wanted to go.

We explained that we wanted to go to fairyland, and the only question was whether we could get there for fivepence. At last, after a great deal of international misunderstanding

(for he spoke French in the Flemish and we in the English manner), he told us that fivepence would take us to a place which I have never seen written down, but which when spoken sounded like the word "Waterloo" pronounced by an intoxicated patriot; I think it was Waerlowe. We clasped our hands and said it was the place that we had been seeking from boyhood, and when we had got there we descended with promptitude.

For a moment I had a horrible fear that it really was the field of Waterloo; but I was comforted by remembering that it was in quite a different part of Belgium. It was a cross-roads, with one cottage at the corner, a perspective of tall trees like Hobbema's "Avenue," and beyond only the infinite flat chess-board of the little fields. It was the scene of peace and prosperity; but I must confess that my friend's first action was to ask the man when there would be another train back to Mechlin. The man stated that there would be a train back in exactly one hour. We walked up the avenue, and when we were nearly half an hour's walk away it began to rain.

* * * * *

We arrived back at the cross-roads sodden and dripping, and, finding the train waiting, climbed into it with some relief. The officer on this train could speak nothing but Flemish, but he understood the name of Mechlin, and indicated that when we came to Mechlin Station he would put us down, which, after the right interval of time, he did.

We got down, under a steady downpour, evidently on the edge of Mechlin, though the features could not easily be recognized through the grey screen of the rain. I do not generally agree with those who find rain depressing.

A shower-bath is not depressing; it is rather startling. And if it is exciting when a man throws a pail of water over you, why should it not also be exciting when the gods throw many pails? But on this soaking afternoon, whether it was the dull sky-line of the Netherlands or the fact that we were returning home without any adventure, I really did think things a trifle dreary. As soon as we could creep under the shelter of a street we turned into a little *café*, kept by one woman. She was incredibly old, and she spoke no French. There we drank black coffee and what was called "cognac fine." "Cognac fine" were the only two French words used in the establishment, and they were not true. At least, the fineness (perhaps by its very ethereal delicacy) escaped me. After a little my friend, who was more restless than I, got up and went out, to see if the rain had stopped and if we could at once stroll back to our hotel by the station. I sat finishing my coffee in a colourless mood, and listening to the unremitting rain.

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Suddenly the door burst open, and my friend appeared, transfigured and frantic.

"Get up!" he cried, waving his hands wildly. "Get up! We're in the wrong town! We're not in Mechlin at all. Mechlin is ten miles, twenty miles off—God knows what! We're somewhere near Antwerp."

"What!" I cried, leaping from my seat, and sending the furniture flying. "Then all is well, after all! Poetry only hid her face for an instant behind a cloud. Positively for a moment I was feeling depressed because we were in the right town. But if we are in the wrong town—why,

we have our adventure after all ! If we are in the wrong town, we are in the right place."

I rushed out into the rain, and my friend followed me somewhat more grimly. We discovered we were in a town called Lierre, which seemed to consist chiefly of bankrupt pastrycooks who sold lemonade.

"This is the peak of our whole poetic progress !" I cried enthusiastically. "We must do something, something sacramental and commemorative ! We cannot sacrifice an ox, and it would be a bore to build a temple. Let us write a poem."

With but slight encouragement, I took out an old envelope and one of those pencils that turn bright violet in water. There was plenty of water about, and the violet ran down the paper, symbolizing the rich purple of that romantic hour. I began, choosing the form of an old French ballade ; it is the easiest because it is the most restricted—

" Can Man to Mount Olympus rise,
And fancy Primrose Hill the scene ?
Can a man walk in Paradise
And think he is in Turnham Green ?
And could I take you for Malines,
Not knowing the nobler thing you were ?
O Pearl of all the plain, and queen,
The lovely city of Lierre.

" Through memory's mist in glimmering guise
Shall shine your streets of sloppy sheen.
And wet shall grow my dreaming eyes,
To think how wet my boots have been.
Now if I die or shoot a Dean——"

Here I broke off to ask my friend whether he thought it expressed a more wild calamity to shoot a Dean or to be a Dean. But he only turned up his coat collar, and

I felt that for him the muse had folded her wings. I re-wrote—

“ Now if I die a Rural Dean,
Or rob a bank I do not care,
Or turn a Tory. I have seen
The lovely city of Lierre.”

“ The next line,” I resumed, warming to it ; but my friend interrupted me.

“ The next line,” he said somewhat harshly “ will be a railway line. We can get back to Mechlin from here, I find, though we have to change twice. I dare say I should think this jolly romantic but for the weather. Adventure is the champagne of life, but I prefer my champagne and my adventures dry. Here is the station.”

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We did not speak again until we had left Lierre, in its sacred cloud of rain, and were coming to Mechlin, under a clearer sky, that even made one think of stars. Then I leant forward and said to my friend in a low voice :

“ I have found out everything. We have come to the wrong star.”

He stared his query, and I went on eagerly : “ That is what makes life at once so splendid and so strange. We are in the wrong world. When I thought that was the right town, it bored me ; when I knew it was wrong, I was happy. So the false optimism, the modern happiness, tires us because it tells us we fit into this world. The true happiness is that we don't fit. We come from somewhere else. We have lost our way.”

He silently nodded, staring out of the window, but whether I had impressed or only fatigued him I could not

tell. "This," I added, "is suggested in the last verse of a fine poem you have grossly neglected—

" 'Happy is he and more than wise
Who sees with wondering eyes and clean
This world through all the grey disguise
Of sleep and custom in between.

" 'Yes; we may pass the heavenly screen,
But shall we know when we are there?
Who know not what these dead stones mean,
The lovely city of Lierre.' "

Here the train stopped abruptly. And from Mechlin church steeple we heard the half-chime: and Joris broke silence with "No bally *hors d'œuvres* for me: I shall get on to something solid at once."

L'ENVOY

Prince, wide your Empire spreads, I ween,
Yet happier is that moistened Mayor,
Who drinks her cognac far from *fine*,
The lovely city of Lierre.

E. V. LUCAS

THE LOST STICK

AT this minute somewhere there is a walking-stick whose one wish in life is to leave its present user and get back to me, its rightful owner ; but what can it do ? A mere voiceless piece of wood, what can it do ? Yet all its thoughts I know are with me.

The malignity of inanimate objects is a theme which has often occupied humorous writers—I remember James Payn being very characteristic about it : a dropped collar stud, I think it was, that set him off—but what fills me with concern is their inanimacy. It is not their bad qualities that are distressing me, but their powerlessness.

And not only their powerlessness, but the friendliness behind it. For things that have been our close companions for a long while, such as watches, rings, necklaces, cigar-cases, although we refer to their inanimacy, surely must have some quality of warmth and devotion in excess of those that have just left the factory and no one has yet acquired. It would be treachery not to believe that.

This lost stick now, which was taken by mistake from a club stand a few weeks ago and has never been returned—I know that it wants me back as much as I want it. I know exactly what it would say had it a tongue.

“ Take me back,” it would say—is saying all the time in its dumb way—to the miscreant who carried it off, “ to my real master, because he needs me and I need him. We belong to each other ; he was my first owner ever since I came from Madagascar and was polished and ferruled and put in that shop in the Avenue de l’Opera, where he bought me in 1919. I kept so straight for him, so strong and yet

so light ; and I had just the handle he likes, sloping upwards a little.

“ We went everywhere together, first in Paris and then in Marseilles and all about there, up and down the noisy Cannebière ; along the Corniche ; he even took me on a boat to the Château d’If, and as far afield as Aix, (to try and find Cézanne’s house) ; and then on a ship to the East. I went into Simon Arzt’s (which every one calls Simon Artz’s) at Port Said with him when he bought his first topee—not a very becoming one, I thought, but few men look well in topees—and I helped to support his steps under the heat of Aden, when he first wore the topee and was so much surprised when a dozen little black boys seized the side of the boat as it reached the landing-stage and demanded a tip on the strength of its being Christmas Day, which we had completely forgotten. I was useful too in repulsing the same boys—or others, for they are all alike—as they followed us in a pack crying ‘ Merry Christmas ’ and holding out their impudent black hands.

“ I was with him in Bombay, where, however, we walked little ; and in Delhi, where in the early morning we walked much ; and in Lucknow, where we went to the races and didn’t do so badly ; and in the stifling streets of Benares among pilgrims and cows ; and in Calcutta, where we went to the races again and lost all that Lucknow had provided, and more. Every evening just before sunset he took me to the Maidan and walked across the grass to the fort and back through the spicy golden haze.

“ I was with him in the Malay States and had the inexpressible pride and delight of hearing him repudiate the offer of a Penang lawyer—by which I don’t mean a six-and-eightpenny legal adviser, but a local walking-stick, so-called, of inferior quality. Nor did he, as most travellers

do, bring away a Malacca cane : which I consider another proof of his nobility of character.

" I was with him when he ate his first mangosteen—that (as I heard him say) écstatic moment in life.

" I was with him when the police of Penang mistook him—' The man in the blue collar '—for an Anarchist, on the occasion of the Governor's first visit to that exceedingly sultry spot, little thinking that, three or four days later, alighting from a special train at a station between Kwala Lumpur and Singapore, he was to be mistaken for the Governor himself (who had not been seen there) and saluted accordingly.

" And then came some more wretched sea, when I lay idle in a cabin and never touched his hand. And our next adventures were in Hong-Kong, where I was with him in the musky narrow streets, and on the top of the mountain which the funicular climbs at such a slope that all the houses seem to be falling down ; and then again in Shanghai, where we walked for miles together through the real Chinese quarter.

" Then more sea—very rough this time—and we landed at Kobe, in Japan, and were inseparable again for a month, and for a week of it were high in the mountains, sometimes in the snow, walking hour after hour. I liked that. It was good after the cabin rack.

" I was with him on that windy ridge above Honolulu, where, no matter how peaceful the day, a tornado is always blowing. I was with him on the Waikiki beach, where the bathers ride on the crests of the waves on planks ; but he did not take me into the sea with him. I was with him in the Aquarium there, where the fish are so unlike all other fish and often so like people you know.

" And then came America, where I was almost the

only walking-stick between the Pacific and the Atlantic. . . .

"And since then there have been two years in this England of ours, where the best walking of all is to be had. . . .

"And I had looked forward to the time when my master's hand would weigh heavily and more heavily on my head, and it would be such a privilege to bear him up, strong with service. And after that . . . well, anyone might have me after that, for I should be lost indeed. . . .

"But I have said enough. So now, my new owner—I cannot call you 'master'; that other one is my master—will you not take me back to the Club and give me to the Hall Porter, who has been waiting for me for weeks? Because you really don't like me as much as your old one—or if you do you are not worthy—and your old one probably is pining too. For we sticks can get fond of quite inferior persons. I don't say your stick is pining just as I am. That is unlikely, because no one could have such a master as mine; but it may be pining all the same."

That is what I like to think of my lost stick as saying.

A MOTHER'S COUNSEL

This is the story of a good mother :—

ONCE upon a time there was a black cocker spaniel mother. She had been a mother before and would probably be one again. In fact, it was her business to produce at regular intervals puppies which her owner might turn into money; and she performed her task punctually and with satisfaction.

As the day drew near for each new litter to break up and depart to their various homes, it was her habit to tell them something about the great world that was awaiting them.

On the occasion which I have in mind there were four puppies in all, and only the most highly trained eye could tell them apart. Four London smuts settling on a new chamois-leather glove are not more alike; but of course no cocker pup would do anything so dull as to settle, especially when just on the point of entering adventurous life.

"There are," the mother began, "many different kinds of people to whom you may go; but my wish for all of you is that real sportsmen may want you. All dogs should work, and a cocker in particular."

"What is a cocker's work?" asked No. 1. They had no names as yet. Names would come later, and they often wondered what kind of names they would get.

"It's one of the disappointing things about human beings," the mother had told them, "the names they give dogs. Of course we cockers are luckier than some of the others, because we're serious. But there's a dreadful monotony about even our names. It's our colour—they

never can forget we're black. 'Nigger' and 'Topsy' and 'Sambo'—you'll meet them everywhere, and perhaps be called those names yourselves. You might *all* be 'Nigger' if you go to different homes. But at any rate that's better than the toy dogs—the Poms and the Pokes—they're called 'Fifi' and 'Tou-Tou' and horrible things like that. . . ."

"Nothing would induce me to be called anything so idiotic," said No. 1, who was of an independent turn. "Never," he added, "Never," sinking his teeth well into No. 3's right ear by way of emphasis.

"What is a cocker's work?" he asked.

"A cocker's proud duty," said the mother, "is to follow the gun, obey his master, and never be more than commonly civil with strangers or visitors, not even if they feed him. In fact, however hungry or greedy you feel, I want you, if possible, to refuse any food that visitors at the house offer you. Will you try?"

"We'll try," said the puppies, but there was no ring of confidence in their tones.

"And," the mother continued, "you must never fail to put your master first—always put your master first. You will be devoted to your mistress, of course, but you must always put your master first—especially you girls."

"Yes, mother," said the girls. Two of the puppies were girls.

"If you go to an honest shooting man," the mother resumed, "as I pray and hope you will, you will be more likely to get good names, and be properly looked after. You will live hard. But if you go just to be a companion there will be temptations to live soft, and I want you to fight against these. It is the cockers' tragedy that they get too fat. All do. I am too fat myself."

"Oh no, darling," said the puppies.

"Yes, I am. I am already rather fat, and soon I shall be very fat. But one can postpone this calamity by eating little and taking plenty of exercise and not sleeping too much—although sleeping is very sweet, especially where they keep good fires and soft hearthrugs. For this reason I hope you may go to a district where there are plenty of hares.

"You are not likely to overtake one, but pursuing them will help you to keep your figure.

"What I most hope that any of you may not do," the mother continued, "is to live in London. It is dreadful for a cocker to have to live in London. You'll be led about on a string, which is humiliating and against nature."

"What is London?" asked No. 1.

"London is a great city, made of stone and asphalt, where there are no rabbits and no partridges, except dead in shops. It is full of hurrying people on the pavements, and cruel rushing wheels in the road. It is no place for a dog."

"I'll never go there," said No. 1 firmly.

"If, however, any of you are fated to become Londoners," the mother went on, "I most earnestly hope that you won't be sold to an actress."

"What is an actress?" asked No. 2.

"An actress is a beautiful lady connected with the stage who doesn't know how to dress in the daytime and who, if she has a dog, likes to carry it . . ."

"No one shall ever carry me," cried No. 1.

". . . and when she is photographed for the papers," the mother continued, "as she is every day, is careful that her 'darling little doggie' is photographed too. So you see why I don't want any of you to belong to an

actress ; you would always be under her arm and always facing the camera. You would also be called a 'doggie.' I don't mind your being famous characters, but if you must be photographed I would rather you were at the heels of a real master, with a gun. Wouldn't you ? "

" Oh yes, mother," they said, while No. 1 went on to affirm that nothing would ever induce *him* to become an actress's property.

At this moment the dog-breeder appeared at the kennel door with a beautiful lady who filled the air with strange perfumes. It was an actress bent on buying the tweetest and darlingest little black doggie for her very own, no matter what it cost ! After a long period of mind-changing and ecstatic doubt, she made her selection. Need I say that she chose No. 1 and that No. 1 was borne away under her arm ?

The last thing that the others heard was the actress's voice of silver saying, " The pet ! I shall call him Tou-Tou ! "

ON FINDING THINGS

AFTER the passage of several years since I had picked up anything, last week I found successively a carriage key (in Royal Hospital Road), a brooch (in Church Street, Kensington), and sixpence in a third-class compartment. It was as I stooped to pick up the sixpence, which had suddenly gleamed at me under the seat of the now empty carriage, that I said to myself that finding things is one of the purest of earthly joys.

And how rare !

I have, in a lifetime that now and then appals me by its length, found almost nothing. These three things last week ; a brown-paper packet when I was about seven containing eight pennies and one halfpenny ; on the grass in the New Forest, when I was about twenty, a half-dollar piece ; and in Brighton, not long after, a gold brooch of just sufficient value to make it decent to take it to the police station, from which, a year later, no one having claimed it, it was returned to me : these constitute nearly half a century's haul. I might add—now and then, perhaps, a safety-pin, pencil, some other trifle, which, no matter how well supplied with such articles one may be, cannot be acquired from nothing without a thrill. Blue-sky dividends, shall we call them ? Even Mr. Rockefeller, I take it, would not have been unmoved had he, instead of myself, stumbled on that treasure between Stony Cross and Boldrewood.

To be given such things is not comparable. With a gift—intention, consciousness, preparation, come in ; to say nothing of obligation later. The event is also compli-

cated (and therefore shorn of its glory) by the second person, since the gift must be given. But, suddenly dropping one's eyes, to be aware of a coin—that is sheer rapture. Other things can be exciting too, but a coin is best, because a coin is rarely identifiable by the loser. Moreover, I am naturally confining myself to those things the ownership of which could not possibly be traced. To find things which have to be surrendered is as impure a joy as the world contains, and no theme for this pen.

The special quality of the act of finding something, with its consequent exhilaration, is half unexpectedness and half separateness. There being no warning, and the article coming to you by chance, no one is to be thanked, no one to be owed anything. In short, you have achieved the greatest human triumph—you have got "something for nothing." That is the true idea: the "nothing" must be absolute; one must never have looked, never have had any finding intention, or even hope. To look for things is to change the whole theory—to rob it of its divine suddenness; to become anxious, even avaricious; to partake of the nature of the rag-picker, the *chiffonier*, or those strange men that one notices walking, with bent heads, along the shore after a storm. (None the less that was a great moment, once, in the island of Coll, when after two hours' systematic searching I found the plover's nest.)

Finding things is at once so rare and pure a joy that to trifle with it is peculiarly heartless. Yet are there people so wantonly in need of sport as to do so. Every one knows of the purse laid on the path or pavement beside a fence, which, as the excited passer-by stoops to pick it up, is twitched through the palings by its adherent string. There is also the shilling attached to a string which can be dropped in the street and instantly pulled up again, setting every

eye at a pavement scrutiny. Could there be lower tricks? I fear so, because some years ago, in the great days of a rendezvous of Bohemians in the Strand known as the Marble Halls, a wicked wag (I have been told) once nailed a bad but plausible sovereign to the floor and waited events. In the case of the purse and string the butts are few and far between and there is usually only a small audience to rejoice in their discomfiture, but the *dénouement* of the cruel comedy at the Marble Halls, of which acquisitiveness and cunning were the warp and woof was only too bitterly public. I am told, such is human resourcefulness in guile, that very few of those who saw the coin and marked it down as their own went for it right away, because had they done so the action might have been noticed and the booty claimed. Instead, the discoverer would look swiftly and stealthily round, and then gradually and with every affectation of nonchalance (which to those in the secret, watching from the corners of their wicked eyes, was so funny as to be an agony) he would get nearer and nearer until he was able at last to place one foot on it.

This accomplished, he would relax into something like real naturalness, and, practically certain of his prey, take things easily for a moment or so. Often, I am told, the poor dupe would, at this point, whistle the latest tune. Even now, however, he dared not abandon subterfuge, or his prize, were he seen to pick it up, might have to be surrendered or shared; so the next move was to drop his handkerchief, the idea being to pick up both it and the sovereign together. Such explosions of laughter as followed upon his failure to do so can (I am informed) rarely have been heard.

—Such was the conspiracy of the nailed sovereign, which, now and then, the victim, shaking the chagrin from

him, would without shame himself join, and become a delighted spectator of his successor's humiliation.

Can you conceive of a more impish hoax? But I should like to see it.

CONCERNING BREAKFAST

HOUSES where everyone is punctual for breakfast are not good to stay in: the virtues so flourish there. A little laxity in the morning is humanizing. For dinner, punctuality by all means, punctuality severely to the minute; but for breakfast let there be liberty to tarry on the way. To be late for breakfast is so natural an act that instinctively one feels it to be right. There is a kind of half-wakeful sleep, following the precarious folding of the hands to which the Comfortable resort when they are first called, that is more precious than all the deep somnolence of the night. The poet knew. How runs his wisdom?—

“ When the Morning riseth red,
Rise not thou, but keep thy Bed ;
When the Dawn is dull and grey,
Sleep is still the better way.
Beasts are up betimes ? But then
They are Beasts, and we are men.”

And—

“ Morning Sleep avoideth Broil,
Wasteth not in greedy Toil,
Doth not suffer Care or Grief,
Giveth aching Bones relief.
Of all the Crimes beneath the Sun,
Say, Which in morning Sleep was done ? ”

Yet breakfast in bed is not the joy some persons would have us think of it. There are crumbs.

The breakfast appetite varies strangely. Some persons are content with a cup of coffee and a piece of toast ; others make it the most determined meal of the day. Once it

was formidable indeed. In Sir John Hawkins' *History of Music* is quoted a sixteenth-century manuscript belonging to the House of Northumberland, which gives the breakfast arrangements of the Percy family both for Lent and for flesh days ; and oh, how some of us have fallen away in trencher work ! Here is the simple Northumbrian scheme : " Breakfast for my Lord and Lady during Lent—First, a loaf of bread in trenchers, 2 manchets [a manchet was a small loaf of white bread], a quart of beer, a quart of wine, 2 pieces of salt fish, 6 baconn'd herring, 4 white herring, or a dish of sprats. Breakfast for my Lord Percy and Master Thomas Percy—Item, half a loaf of household bread, a manchet, a bottle of beer, a dish of butter, and a piece of salt fish, a dish of sprats, or three white herring. Breakfast for the nursery, for my Lady Margaret and Master Ingeram Percy—Item, a manchet, a quart of beer [this for the nursery !], a dish of butter, a piece of salt fish, a dish of sprats, or three white herring." At ordinary times my Lord and Lady fared thus : " First, a loaf of bread in trenchers, 2 manchets, a quart of beer, a quart of wine, half a chine of mutton, or else a chine of beef boiled " ; Lord Percy and Master Thomas Percy disposed of " half a loaf of household bread, a manchet, 1 bottle of beer, a cheeking, or else 3 mutton bones boiled " ; while to the thirsty nursery went " a manchet, 1 quart of beer, and three mutton bones boiled."

In Hall's *Seventh Year of King Henry VIII*, we find what constituted the breakfast of outlaws. " Then sayde Robyn Hood, Sir, outlawes brekefaste is venyson, and therefore you must be content with suche fare as we use. Then the Kyng and Quene sate downe, and were served with venyson and wyne by Robyn Hood and hys men, to theyre great contentacion." " Contentacion " is a splendid word ; it

might be reserved for red-letter breakfasts. Izaak Walton and his honest scholar made brave breakfast off a piece of powdered beef and a radish or two, as they sat beneath a sycamore. Considering that this was at nine o'clock and they had begun fishing soon after five, they deserved it. "All excellent good," said the honest scholar as he wiped his mouth, "and my stomach excellent good too." Walton's collaborator, Master Charles Cotton, was less indulgent. "My diet," he said, "is always one glass [of ale] so soon as I am dressed, and no more till dinner," which compared with the excesses of the Percy children, is asceticism itself. Viator, in the same work, took even less. "I will light a pipe," he said, "for that is commonly my breakfast too." Viator, however, was misguided. Had he eaten breakfast first and lighted his pipe after, his lot would have been more enviable. No pipe is so gracious as that which follows breakfast. Calverley sinned when he omitted this season from his ode to tobacco.

"Sweet when they've cleared away
Lunch,"

he sings. True ; but sweeter, nay, sweetest, when they are clearing away breakfast.

To the child breakfast means bread and milk, or porridge, and the beginning of another day. To me it meant this and nothing more until at an early age a reading-book was embarked on, which consisted of a long dialogue between father and children concerning the nature and the source of the articles upon the breakfast-table. The conversation, which was continued through several breakfasts, proceeded in the manner of the catechism. One child asked where coffee came from, and papa replied that it came from Arabia. Another was struck by the whiteness of the salt, and said so. Papa at once explained the whiteness of the

salt and passed easily to a lecture on salt-mining. The aim of the book was to show that the antipodal peoples of the earth meet at the breakfast table ; that energy must be expended in both hemispheres before Henry and Susan can enjoy their bread and treacle. This reading-book was epoch-making. Henceforward breakfast was an educative meal ; and I have only quite lately lost the feeling that at any moment a searching question might be asked concerning the origin and manufacture of everything eaten. From the children's books of to-day, it might be noted, the well-informed parent is departing.

Oatmeal marks not only the child's breakfast, it was the favourite food of Edinburgh Reviewers. Thus do extremes meet. It is best with cream, which indeed might well be defined, after a well-known model, as the stuff which makes porridge insipid if you eat it without it. If advertisements are to be believed, the most popular form of porridge is of Quaker origin. Quaker Oats, one supposes, should be the very antithesis of wild oats. Porridge—homely, honest fare though it be—is the cause of more strife than any other dish. The great salt-*versus*-sugar battle is eternally waged above it ; for some take salt and some sugar, and they that take salt are the scorn of those that take sugar, and they that take sugar are despised of those that take salt. Quakers being a pacific folk, their oats should have stopped this warfare.

Personally, I like to begin the day's eating with watercress. It is so sharp and awakening. Indeed, to show to fullest advantage, to scintillate as Nature intended it to, it is at breakfast that watercress must be eaten, newly picked, with salt and bread-and-butter. The bread must be white and new, and the butter mild and fresh. The ecstasy of the surprise of watercress to the palate and tongue ! The lively,

pricking sensation of the mustard-like sharpness, the fragrance of the sap, and, above all, the cleanness, the good-humoured, bright cleanness of the herb! Watercress, if it tastes of anything, tastes of early morning in spring. It is eloquent of the charm of its native environment. Nothing else—lettuce, radishes, cucumber, land cress, or celery—speaks or sings to the eater, as watercress does, of cool streams and overhanging banks and lush herbage. The watercress has for neighbours the water-lily, the marsh marigold, and the forget-me-not. The spirit of the rivulet abides in its heart.

No matter of what the breakfast consists, marmalade is the coping-stone of the meal. Without marmalade the finest breakfast is incomplete, a broken arc. Only with marmalade can it be a perfect round. Everyone's home-made marmalade is notoriously the best; but where the commercially-manufactured article is used opinions differ. Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria (it is stated so on the pot) preferred a viscous variety which is impossible to Oxford men bred on Cooper's. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, it will be remembered, favoured Keelwell's; or, at any rate, it was this maker who assisted in the embellishment of little Sorrow's grave. The Universities are nobly loyal to Marmalade. At Cambridge there is a saying that no man can pass his Little-go until he has consumed his own weight in it, while Oxford first called it Squish. The attitude of women to marmalade has never been quite sound. True, they make it excellently, but afterwards their association with it is one lamentable retrogression. They spread it over pastry; they do not particularly desire it at breakfast; and (worst) they decant it into glass dishes and fancy jars.

Where there is no marmalade, shift may be made with

honey or jam ; and treacle is not entirely out of favour, although the enterprise of Bonnie Dundee has dealt it so hard a blow that you may fare far in your quest of the golden syrup. The great charm of treacle is in its transit from the pot to the plate ; with no other liquid, except the exquisite thin honey of Switzerland, is it possible to trace one's autograph. Most of us as children saw our names writ in treacle.

Breakfast is a meal at which one becomes apiarian. Everything being on the table, or on the sideboard, one can sip, bee-like, where one will ; hence perhaps, the absence of conversation at breakfast. At dinner, where formality is preserved, where one progresses artistically and with dignity towards repletion, conversation is fostered ; at breakfast there is merely chatter, sporadic and trivial ; scraps from letters, puns, dreams, and the description of strange noises heard in the night. Dreams told at breakfast should be accepted with reservations, for few persons are strong enough to tell them faithfully. It is doubtful if they should be told at all. Yet, although breakfast does little either for the conversationalist or the gourmet, it is often the merriest and freshest of the day's meals. The joy of it is new every morning. Breakfast is the beginning of another day : lunch and dinner are but continuations ; and to those glad natures which are reinvigorated and heartened by every sunrise, breakfast is a time for high spirits. High spirits, however, must not be confounded with brilliance. Only dull people, said Oscar Wilde, are brilliant at breakfast ; which is a truth, in spite of the works of Oliver Wendell Holmes and the records which have come down to us of the scintillating breakfast-parties given by Samuel Rogers and Lord Holland. But the table which in those days was set in a roar approximated

more nearly to the luncheon-table than the breakfast-table as we understand it. Breakfast-parties are indeed practically obsolete.¹ At the ordinary breakfast-table there is little wit. One reason is the early hour—wit is for the day's decline; another is discontent—bed is not yet forgotten, nor the breakfast-gong forgiven, and wit requires a mind at ease.

¹ The following remark of Macaulay to Mrs. Stowe thus loses point, and this point is not restored by reading lunch for breakfast, for the old breakfast does not quite take the place of modern lunch: "You invite a man to dinner because you *must* invite him; because you are acquainted with his grandfather, or it is proper you should; but you invite a man to breakfast because you want to see *him*. You may be sure, if you are invited to breakfast, there is something agreeable about you."

MEDITATIONS AMONG THE CAGES

DRIFTING somewhat aimlessly about the Zoo on Sunday afternoon, I came suddenly upon the hippopotamus's vast and homely countenance peering round the corner of its stockade. It is the hugest, most incredible thing—just for an instant a little like the late Herbert Campbell carried out to the highest power—and I felt for the moment as if I were in another world, a kind of impossible pantomime land. There was nothing frightening about it; it was more companionable than many faces that sit opposite one in a 'bus; and yet it was repellent, unnegotiable, absurd. It is not a thing to see suddenly.

This hippopotamus, who is now thirty years or more old, shows signs of age. Her feet are sore, her eyes are scaly, her teeth are few and awry and very brown. In bulk she is immense, of a rotund solidity unequalled in my experience. The Great Tun, filled with its gallons, would, one feels, be light compared with her. I could not help wondering what will happen when she dies, as die she must before very long: how her gigantic carcase will be moved, how dealt with, how eliminated. I am sure her lifeless form will be the heaviest thing in London—heavier than any girder, heavier than any gun. One has this impression, I suppose, because one knows something of the weight of an ordinary body, and one's mind multiplies that, whereas a girder or a gun conveys no distinct impression. Even the baby hippopotami, in the next cage, ridiculous little pigs, fresh from their packing-case and the voyage from Africa, are probably each heavier than four aldermen; but the old one is,

fifty times heavier than the baby, and might easily, such is the consistency of her alarming barrel, be full of lead. When her tottering legs at length give way and she falls to rise no more, may I not be there to see !

Standing before this ridiculous mammoth, so useless and unwieldy, I failed utterly to understand the feelings of the big-game hunter who could deliberately shoot it. If ever there was an animal that should inculcate or encourage the maxim "Live and let live," it is the hippopotamus. I cannot understand how a man can dare to be responsible for adding so much mortality to this already encumbered earth. And yet there are members of West End clubs sipping their coffee at this moment who have probably shot many. To kill a lion or tiger, or any of the active dangerous beasts : I can understand that, although I wish never to do it ; but to interrupt the already stagnant life of one of these gentle mountains—I could never bring myself to do that. How can one kill a creature that wallows ?

Falling in later with a zoological Fellow, with a head full of Greek and a pocket full of apples and onions, without which he never visits these friends, I learned many curious facts. Among other things, I learned that the hornbill, who looks a desperately fierce biped, prepared at a second's notice to stab one with his iron beak, even in the back, is really the kindest and most companionable of birds, ready and eager for any amount of petting. He is also, perhaps, the best short-slip in the Gardens, for unwieldy as his beak looks to be, he can catch anything, throw it how you may. R. E. Foster had hitherto been my ideal, but he reigns in my mind no more. *Le roi est mort ; vive l'hornbill.*

I cannot get over my surprise about this living caricature, whose favourite food, it ought to be known, is grapes. No animal looks much less tractable and nursable ; yet as a

matter of fact the hornbill is as anxious to be noticed as a spoiled dog, and as full of sentimentality. Best of all—even more than crabs—he likes to be scratched under the chin, and he leans his head farther and farther back in the enjoyment of this ecstasy, until his bill points into the sky like a village spire.

In close proximity to the hornbills lives the boat-bill, who is as lovely as a Japanese print, and Pel's Owl, who has perhaps the richest eyes in the whole Zoo, and not the least melancholy life; for, accustomed once to fly lightly and noiselessly over the surface of African rivers, catching unwary fish in his claws as he flies, he is now confined to a cage within a cage, a few feet square. What must be his thoughts as he watches the sight-seers go by! What must be the thoughts of all these caged aliens! The seals and sea-lions, one can believe, are not unhappy; the otter is in his element; the birds in the large aviaries, the monkeys, the snakes—these, one feels, are not so badly off. But the beasts and birds of a higher spirit, a mounting ambition—the eagles and hawks and lions and tigers, and Pel's Owl—what a destiny! What a future! I would not think their thoughts.

I learned also from my instructive Fellow that one of the llamas can expectorate with more precision and less warning than any American described by the old satirists; that the Bird of Paradise, exquisite and beautiful though he is, with every right to be disdainful and eremitic, will yet cling to the sides of the cage to eat a piece of apple from the hand, and, having taken it, swallow it whole; that the most westerly owl in the owl house will say "woof-woof" after anyone that it esteems; that eagles like having their heads stroked, and that there is one of them who, if you give it a lead, will crow like a cock. I doubt if such things should be.

I like to think of the eagle as soaring into the face of the sun with an unwinking eye, and permitting no liberties. But in Regent's Park. . . . I suppose we must make allowances. Does not the rhinoceros eat biscuits ?

I learned also that the thar loves orange-peel above all delicacies, and that the mountain goat who possesses the biggest horns can bring them down on the railings with a thwack that, if your finger chanced to be there, as it easily might, would assuredly cut it in two ; but, on the other hand, that the slender, graceful deer in the pen near the elephants, who has lately lost one horn, is as gentle as a spaniel and greatly in need of sympathy.

I learned, also, that the baby elephant eats Quaker oats ; and that there are keepers in the Gardens who have never yet seen the beaver, not because they keep looking the opposite way, but because that creature is so unaccountably shy. The only chance one has of catching a glimpse of him is at sunset.

But the introduction to Delia was the crown of the morning—the coping-stone of my good fortune in meeting this zoological friend. We spent an hour in her company, while she toyed with an assorted fruitarian dinner. I should not call her a slave to her palate : I never remember seeing a non-human animal (is she a non-human animal, I wonder,) so willing to drop a delicacy and turn to other things. She turned with chief interest to my walking-stick ; but now and then the trapeze caught her restless eye and she was on it ; and now and then it seemed to be time to embrace or to be embraced. A very simple, loving soul, this Delia (is she a soul, has she a soul, I wonder,) with the prettiest little thumb imaginable, for an ourang-outang, and, so far as I could observe, no *arrières pensées*. Clean, too. In fact, quite one of us.

Delia is the first ape I ever saw that did not make me uneasy. So many monkeys and especially the larger apes are such travesties of ourselves—and not only such travesties, but now and then such reminders of our worse selves—that one regards them with an increased scepticism as to man's part not only in this life, but in the next. But Delia is winsome ; Delia has the virtues. She is kind, and gentle and quiet. All her movements are deliberate and well thought out. She has none of the dreadful furtive suspiciousness of the smaller monkeys ; so far as I could see no pettiness at all. And the hair that serves her also for clothes, like Lady Godiva, is a very beautiful rich auburn. I cherish her memory.

It was the more pleasant to come under Delia's fascination, because I had just seen that horrible sight, the feeding of the diving birds. Here, at the most, one said in Delia's warm basement-room—here, at the most, are only mischief and want of thought ; here are no cruel predatory jaws pursuing their living prey. The diving birds give one, indeed, a new symbol for rapacity and relentlessness, partly because the victims which they catch with such accuracy and ferocity are so exquisitely made for joy and life. Can there be anything more beautiful than a slender diaphanous fish, gliding through the water with the light of day inhabiting its fragile body ? The movements of a fish are in themselves grace incarnate. Yet the keeper can fling a dozen of these little miracles into the tank, straightway to begin their magical progress through the green water, and then he can open a cage, to let a huge black and white bird, all cruel eye and snapping beak, plunge in, in two minutes to seize and swallow every fish. He can do this, and does this, once or twice a day. The spectacle appeared to be very popular ; but I came away sick.

I walked from Delia's boudoir to the lions, and from the lions to the sea-lions, by way of the long row of sheds where the nilghais and hartebeests and elands dwell, and found that the real interest of this house lay, not in those aliens, but in a domestic creature which, common though it be in English homes, is yet not too easy to observe—the mouse. If you want to see the mouse at ease, confidently moving hither and thither, and taking its meals with a mind secure from danger, go to the Zoo, nominally to study the eland. It is no injustice to the eland, who cares nothing for notice, therein differing completely from the male giraffe, who looks after his departing friends with a moist and wistful eye and a yearning extension of neck that only the stony-hearted can resist. The eland is less affectionate; he has no timidity, and he has no vanity. He does not mind what you look at, and therefore you may lavish all your attention on the mice that move about among his legs like the shadows of little racing clouds on a windy April day.

And so I came away, having seen everything in the Zoo except the most advertised animal of all—the pickpocket. To see so many visitors to the cages wearing a patronizing air, and to hear their remarks of condescension or dislike, as animal after animal is passed under review, has a certain piquancy in the contiguity of this ever present notice, "Beware of Pickpockets," warning man against—what?—man. Lions, at any rate, one feels (desirable as it may be to capture their skins for hearthrugs), pick no pockets.

CLOTHES OLD AND NEW

IT is a curious experience to walk, as I did, recently, behind a man dressed in one's old suit. You have a vision of yourself, or, if you will, a glimpse of your double, a reminder that you are not everybody. This being the first time I had seen the suit from the back, a vague sense of familiarity preceded recognition, and then, looking steadfastly on its pattern, I remembered how kindly and liberal a coat it was, and how easy and unconstrained all movements of limb had been in it, and how many years it still had before it, and I perceived sorrowfully that I had given away as noble a set of hartogs as man ever possessed. This proves how careful we should be in parting with cast-off suits. Thoreau affirmed that old clothes should be burnt : and, from the point of view of those who hold that attire ought to be autobiographical, this is true ; for how can tweeds handed on from one man to another continue to be autobiographical ? But Thoreau's contention was a counsel of perfection—that is to say, advice for Thoreaus—and, moreover, so few persons have autobiographies that we may as well persevere in the bestowal of old clothes.

Of all old clothes, none wears so sorry an air as the old fur-lined coat. A new fur-lined coat is magnificent. It is a symbol of luxury, the antithesis of the hair shirt. It is more than a garment, it is a fortification. An Englishman's fur coat is his castle. But when decay has set in, when it is partly bald and entirely weather-worn, then the fur coat is the wretchedest object in civilization. It is not good even for charades ; although in its luxuriant days how versatile it was ! From time to time it had been

(inside out) most of the larger animals in the Zoo. Such versatility, indeed, has the fur coat that on the night of a children's party the prudent father turns the key upon it. Fur-lined coats never become hartogs; nor do overcoats. These, therefore, may be given away or sold without heart-flutterings; although the ordinary overcoat should not be parted with lightly. An old overcoat is a good fellow to accompany one to sea, to wear on deck on rough or rainy nights. But, strictly speaking, no overcoat becomes a hartog.

And what, I seem to hear you ask, what are hartogs? Old clothes that are less imposing and more comfortable than any others are hartogs. To be old is not sufficient; nor is it enough that they are easy. To be hartogs they must combine both these merits. Good clothes when they grow baggy and faded become hartogs; bad clothes, never. Inferior and ill-fitting clothes become merely "old clo." The derivation of hartogs is a secret; but all philologists and all who, like R. L. Stevenson, have a "love of lovely words," will recognize in the term a neologue of singular fitness and attraction. Think about it for a minute or two, and you will realize that clothes of the kind described above could not possibly be known in any other way. They are hartogs—just hartogs, and nothing else. Old clothes of the common kind one thinks of without affection, but hartogs are beloved. Anything is good enough to cover nakedness; hartogs do more—they confer cheerfulness and irresponsibility, they fit the wearer for a freer life. Yet it must be understood that hartogs are never absolutely disreputable, never so old that one cannot meet the vicar's wife without shame.

In ordinary life the wearer of hartogs disdains coats and mackintoshes, except in extreme stress of weather. It is the winds and rains of heaven and the heat of the sun that have

made his hartogs what they are ; the indoor life produces a very inferior result. The best hartogs are stamped by the universe itself. They are the garb of the wise traveller. You meet hartogs on Helvellyn and among the Langdale Pikes ; you recognize them in the Black Forest and on the Furka ; you are aware of them in the Trossachs and beneath the smooth rotundities and swelling undulations of the South Downs. Nature's best lovers woo her in hartogs.

This definition should be exhaustive enough, but still a little may be added. It should be said, for instance, that few women have enough courage to achieve hartogs. The mass dare not. There are also men who dare not, and there are men whose position is against it. Bishops probably have no hartogs.

Of all the hartogs the coat is the most dearly prized. One does not feel so affectionately towards a waistcoat : little is lovable about a waistcoat ; but a coat becomes a friend, a brother. Men have worn coats for decades. A satisfying coat is worth its weight in platinum, because it is so rare. The waistcoat is within the compass of any tailor ; but a coat is different. Nothing is quite so disgusting as the determination of tailors to have their own way in the matter of the coat. You order a dozen personal touches ; you stipulate for no pads in the shoulders ; for a deep collar, to turn up in wet or cold ; for extra pockets inside ; for no lining in the back ; for no fashionable antics in the cutting. And the tailor smiles and smiles. None the less is he a villain, for when the coat comes home it is precisely what you struggled to make certain it should not be. A tailor who will obey to the letter is more than rubies. Hence the lovableness of a truly good coat.

Hats are lovable too. Boots however, are too transient to be loved. One dares not love them. At the most a pair

of boots can be hartogs for a year. Boots seem to me civilization's most conspicuous failure: they pinch, they cramp, they mar, they have every tightness but water-tightness; they are hot in summer and cold in winter; they have no durability; they are costly. They make it almost worth while to have one's feet amputated early in life. Lord Erskine said it was comforting to remember that when the hour came for all secrets to be revealed, then, at length, we should learn why shoes are always made too tight. And yet what is to be done? To go barefoot is, after all these ages of shoe-leather, impossible, and sandals are chilly and socialistic. Indoors, of course, there are slippers, and latterly a very excellent kind devised of felt has been obtainable. But no good work, it has been said, has ever been done in slippers, and certainly no good walking. For outdoor life in this mutable England we have yet to discover the fitting boot. The quest of it is the business of a lifetime: a man may be said never to come within measurable distance of being well shod until he has one foot in the grave.

In winter there is nothing more comfortable than hartogs; but in summer flannels supersede them. Buoyancy, liberty, the power to do—these are put on with flannels. Flannels are as levelling almost as nakedness. On the cricket field all men are equal. But once, in appearance at any rate, there were distinctions. In the old days, when George Parr hit to long leg for six, and George Freeman bowled like lightning, flannels were a distinguishing sign. In those days the professional was marked by his dress for the dependant he was. He wore a coloured shirt, and his whites were not white. You may see them in old photographs. My earliest recollection of county cricket is a Sussex and Surrey match in the eighteen-seventies; and I remember distinctly that Pooley's flannels were yellow,

Jupp's grey. But now, except in a few cases, there is nothing but initials to distinguish the two classes of cricketers. A change has come over the professional, and his flannels shine like an amateur's. A stranger would find it impossible to pick out the unpaid from the paid.

The opponents of the Press ought to bear it in mind that no substitute for clothing is more effective than a newspaper—that is to say, no sudden substitute. An American enthusiast, who recently walked round the world for a wager, wore only a copy of the *New York Herald* until he had amassed, by exhibiting himself, enough money to buy clothes; and now and then come tidings of a party of tourists who have escaped from the attentions of Italian banditti or Hungarian brigands in nothing more substantial than last week's *Times*. It seems to be established that when in difficulties for clothes the first thought of civilized man is for a newspaper; just as the first thought of primitive man was for a leaf. Not the least funny story in that diverting book, *Many Cargoes*, tells of a captain who lost his "cloes at cribbage," and was found the next morning by his rescuer "in a pair of socks and last week's paper." This, as we have seen, is not a particularly novel position, but what distinguished Captain Bross from his companions in this form of misfortune was his occupation. When discovered he was "reading the advertisements." That is true philosophy. The completest deshable is obtainable in the tropics. The late Henry Drummond once wrote home from Central Africa that he had nothing on but a helmet and three mosquitoes. Sydney Smith, who was the first man to pray in August for the power to take off his flesh and sit in his bones, described the height of bliss attainable by a Sierra Leone native, as sitting in one-half of a melon, with the other half on his head, eating the pulp.

Of all men, tramps and peers care least about their appearance. This indifference to public opinion of one's clothes is indeed an enviable state to reach. I have always liked the story of the old fellow who at home dressed badly because everyone knew him, and badly when he travelled because no one knew him. He was one of the few men who have had courage to dress to please themselves. Most of us dress to please other persons; and even then, it must be added, rarely succeed. A distinguished statesman objected on principle to make himself uncomfortable by dressing for dinner, but he had a very charming way of disarming criticism and propitiating his hostess. He had upstairs, he would assure her, an excellent dress suit for which he had paid a high price, and if it would be any satisfaction to the company, his secretary would bring it down and display it. But one has to be a Cabinet Minister to carry off such an idiosyncrasy as this. At many dinner-parties the guests have been asked as much on account of their clothes as their wit; the man without a wedding garment in the parable apparently had no compensating distinction of intellect. A good dinner-story tells how Dean Stanley once arrived at table with one side of his collar flapping in the air. During the meal his hostess asked him if he was aware of its condition, and if he would like any assistance in rectifying it. "Oh no," he replied genially; "it broke while I was dressing. I don't mind. Do you?" These are the great men.

Of the clothes of women I know little, except that the fashions often change too quickly, and it seems very hard for some girls to dress in such a way as to satisfy their elder sisters. I have also noticed that after she has become engaged a girl gets more critical of her brother's clothes. She has acquired a standard.

OF THE BEST STORIES

I WAS reading the other day that that most amusing of clerks in holy orders, who writes Irish farcical stories over the pseudonym "G. A. Birmingham," but is known to the angels as Canon Hannay, has given it as his opinion that the best funny thing ever said is Charles Lamb's reply to the doctor who recommended him to take a walk on an empty stomach. "Whose?" inquired Lamb. That certainly is among the best of the comic remarks of the world; but why does Canon Hannay put it down to Lamb? All my life I have been associating it with another humorous clerk in holy orders and also a canon, the Rev. Sydney Smith, and it is to be found in every collection of his good sayings. Canon Hannay, who is normally so eager to give the Church even more than her due,—for did he not create out of "J. J." the curate a super-magazine-hero, blending Sherlock Holmes, Captain Kettle, and Terence Mulvaney in one?—Canon Hannay, one would think, would have naturally allotted Sydney Smith everything. Moreover, the joke is more in Sydney Smith's way than in Lamb's; not because Lamb was not expert at that peculiar variety of nonsense, but because Lamb had a passion for walking, and rarely, I should say, suffered from any malady needing this particular remedy; whereas the witty canon was a diner-out, prone to gout and other table afflictions, and a walk on an empty stomach would probably have done him a world of good.

And now I lay aside my pen for a few moments in order to wonder what my own favourite story is, and have the usual difficulty in remembering any stories at all. Search-

ing my memory, I find that Lamb comes up first, which is not unnatural, for in the stories which most appeal to me there must be irresponsibility rather than malice. Malice is easier, for one thing, and the laughter it causes is of an inferior quality. That touch of gay nonsense which Lamb had, and Sydney Smith had, is worth (to me) all the brilliant bitternesses. This time, too, it is authentic Lamb, and not Brummagem. My momentary choice is Lamb's reply to the reproach of his India House superior, "You always come late to the office." "Yes, but see how early I leave!" That could not easily be beaten.

Lamb, however, did not consider that his best thing. We have it on evidence that he thought his not too kindly remark to his friend Hume on the size of Hume's family his best joke; but I, for one, do not agree with him. Hume it seems, was the father of a numerous brood, and he happened once to be so ill-advised as to mention his paternal achievement, apparently with pride, in Lamb's presence. "One fool," quoted Lamb, "makes many." Personally, I don't much esteem this story, not only because it is a score off a simple creature, and a rather too facile one at that, but also because it comes into the category of those sayings which the joker must himself have reported, or which the recipient of the witticism could not well report except resentfully. We can imagine the auditor of the priceless reply, "But see how early I leave," after recovering from the stunned condition into which its tremendous irrelevance and foolishness knocked him, hurrying away in perplexity to report it in all its incredibleness to fellow-officials: "What on earth do you think that that mad creature Lamb has just said to me?" and so on. But one does not see Hume hastening round to spread that family joke. Lamb, or another, must himself have done it.

Similarly, when the Austrian journalist Saphir, who said so many witty things, met an enemy in a narrow passage, and on the enemy remarking, "I'll not make way to let a fool pass," pressed himself against the wall, saying, "But I will," it must have been Saphir who took the glad tidings round Vienna. A man, said Lamb (and proved it, too), may laugh at his own joke; but I think we always rather prefer that it should first get into currency by the other fellow's agency.

And yet, if that rule were strictly followed we should lose too many good things, for your true humorist scatters his jewels indiscriminately and does not reserve them for the fitting ear.

The late Sir Walter Raleigh pointed out that the reason why we have comparatively so few records of Lamb's jokes is that he made them to simple people, who either did not understand how good they were, or were not in the way of quoting them. As a friend of mine, who does something in a waggish line himself, remarked sadly to me the other day: "I am always saying the right thing to the wrong people. Some one asked me the other day if I had known William Sharp. 'No,' I said, 'but I once met Wilfred Blunt,' and instead of laughing, my friend began to talk seriously of the *Sonnets of Proteus*. I have no luck." The fact is that what all wits need is a Boswell. Without a Boswell it is necessary, if they are to be reported, that they must either themselves publish their good things or keep on repeating them until the right listener hears and notes them. Had there been a Boswell for Lamb . . . But Lamb could not have endured one.

Having reached that point in this discursion, I sallied forth to the haunts of men to collect other opinions as to

the best story. One of them at once gave Sydney Smith's reply to the little girl who was stroking the tortoise's shell, "because the tortoise liked it." "As well stroke the dome of St. Paul's," said Sydney, "to please the Dean and Chapter." A second choice shakes me seriously in my own selection, for it ranks high indeed among the great anecdotes. Sam Lewis, the money-lender, was, at Monte Carlo, a regular habitué of the Casino. One day he bade everyone farewell. "I shan't see you for a fortnight or so," he said; "I'm off to Rome." "Rome?" they inquired in astonishment. "Yes. I'm told it's wonderful." Two or three nights later he was back in his seat at the gambling table. "But what about Rome?" his friends asked. "You can 'ave Rome," said Sam.

A third offered an historic dialogue from the Lobby. It seemed that an M.P., whom we will call X., somewhat elevated by alcohol, insulted another M.P., whom we will call Y., as he passed through that sacred apartment, by calling him "a — fool." Y., stopping, said severely and pityingly, "X., you're drunk. I shall take no notice of what you say." "I know I'm drunk," replied X., "but I shall be all right to-morrow. You're *always* a — fool."

Since writing the last paragraph I have asked two more friends for their favourite stories. One of them at once gave me Whistler's comment on reading in the *Reminiscences* of W. P. Frith, R.A., painter of "The Derby Day," that as a youth it was a toss-up which he became: an auctioneer or an artist. "He must have tossed up," said Whistler. The other choice was American and more cynical. A man's wife had died, and on the morning of the funeral the man was found sitting on his doorstep whistling gaily as he whittled a stick. One of the mourners

remonstrated. It was most unseemly, he pointed out, that the widower should be thus employed on the day on which they were bearing to her last resting-place the remains of a woman so beautiful in person and in character—a faithful wife, a fond mother, an inspiration and model to the neighbourhood. "Don't you realize that she was all this?" the scandalized guest inquired. "Oh yes," said the husband, "but—I didn't like her."

Apropos of Whistler, an artist friend who knew both that delicate Ishmaelite and George Du Maurier, tells me a story of the two which has not, I believe, ever seen print, and is unusual because Whistler is worsted in it. It seems that the great Impressionist was once developing, to a number of painters, some revolutionary theory or paradox with his customary arrogance and certainty. "I'm not arguing with you; I'm telling you," he said, after an interruption. "Yes," was Du Maurier's comment, "but you forget we're not the Horse Marines."

And now, having set down all these examples, I remember what probably is the best good thing of all. For, as everyone knows, there is some malign fate which has provided that one's memory shall always be a little late when the best stories are being swapped. But better late than never. Dumas père, it may not be generally known, had African blood. He also was the father (like the great Sheridan) of a witty son. Said Dumas fils one day, of his sublime sire: "My father is so vain and ostentatious that he is capable of riding behind his own carriage to persuade people that he keeps a black servant." Having recalled that of Dumas fils, here is the best story that I know of Dumas père. Perhaps it is as good a story as has ever been told of any egoist. Coming away from dinner at a house noted for its dullness, he was asked by someone if

he had not been dreadfully bored. "I should have been," he replied, "if *I* hadn't been there."

But of course these are not the best stories. Another day's memory would yield far better ones.

ROBERT LYND

THE SHY FATHERS

IT is difficult to refuse a child's invitation, even when it is to attend the breaking-up ceremony at a school. At first, I pleaded shyness; but my niece said with a pout, "That's what all the men say. Elizabeth says her father's shy, but she's simply going to make him come; and Ann's father says *he's* too shy, but Ann's going to make him come, too. Why should all the fathers be shy?" "I don't know anything about the fathers," I told her; "I can only answer for the uncles." "Well, why should uncles be shy?" That, I confess, bowled me. "Oh, well," I said, "I'll come along with the shy fathers."

I admit I should not have gone if I had not been fairly sure that the shy fathers would be there in considerable numbers. The thought of being present in a large school-room, with no other man present, in the midst of a throng of far from shy women and children, I find terrifying to the imagination. It is not that I dislike the company of women and children: on the whole, I think it the best company in the world. But, as Bacon has said, a crowd is not company, and the loneliness of a man entirely surrounded by women and children surpasses even the loneliness of a man isolated in the middle of the Sahara. Apart from this, however, I think there are several reasons for the shyness of fathers when they are pressed by their children to go to a breaking-up party. The average father, I suspect, is afraid of what his children's school friends may think of him. He knows that, by the grace of God, his own children do not see him as he really is. They play games with him as with an equal. They laugh at

least at some of his jokes. They appear at times to regard him as the richest, the bravest and the cleverest man in the world. Has not one boasted of one's own father? I remember at the age of eight boasting to a bosom friend that my father was a multi-millionaire. He had boastfully said that his father had a million pounds. I said that my father had three. And, for all I knew, it might have been true. A child, indeed, is reluctant to believe that there may be fathers in the world superior in any way to its own. A friend of mine, an occasional writer of mediocre verse, was referring to some story about Blake the other day, when his ten-year-old daughter interrupted him to ask who Blake was. "Oh, he was a genius—wrote 'Tiger, tiger,'" said her father. "Was he as big a genius as you?" inquired the little girl. "Good gracious, you mustn't call me a genius!" he told her. "*I think you are,*" she said, gently but firmly. "Why"—he explained the situation—"I couldn't write 'Tiger, tiger,' if I lived to be a thousand." "I would rather have 'Oh, Bonar, Bonar, why thus dishonour?'" she told him, quoting the first line of a set of atrocious political verses he had written. Of such is the kingdom of Heaven.

I do not, I may say, suggest that a father never sees the little waves of criticism stealing into his child's face, or that he has any reason to fear that his child is likely, for any long period of time, to mistake him for a god. He knows that the process of finding him out may be a slow one, but that it is cumulative and that it is sure. But he also knows that his child, as a rule, over-estimates him in a way in which no other child would. That is why, when he is asked to submit himself to the critical eyes of his children's schoolfellows, he feels suddenly shy and apprehensive. No man may be able to add a cubit to his stature, but he

has an uneasy suspicion that the eyes of other people's children may be able to take several cubits off. Even so, I do not think that it is mainly an injury to his vanity that the shy father fears. After all, if other people's children do not like him, he can always avenge himself by disliking them twice as much. It is chiefly on his children's account that he feels shy. Being sentimental, he feels—or pretends to feel—that he is unworthy to be the father of such wonderful children, and he shrinks from saddling them with a second-rate parent in presence of their friends. He must look, he tells himself, an odd sort of fish, and though, heaven knows, all the other fathers of his acquaintance look as odd sorts of fish as you could wish to meet, still he does not like the notion of an odd sort of fish being seen in public as the father of these particular children. He would hate to see his children appearing in ridiculous clothes; he hates equally the thought of their appearing with a ridiculous parent.

There is, I am told, no greater happiness known on earth than that of a father who, after a party to which his children's school friends have been invited, can lie back in his chair and tell himself that he did not behave so badly after all. It is always pleasant to pass an examination, but there is no examination which it is a more blessed relief to pass than an examination by one's children's friends. Fathers have told me of the nervousness they have seen in their children on such occasions—of the impatient expression they have observed on the little face that, at a joke that has no point or that has a point that nobody is able to see, tells them of the silent soliloquy: "Daddy being silly again!" Pity the tremors of children for their fathers. Pity the tremors of fathers for themselves. Happy is the child whose father acquits himself with credit

in the presence of its friends. How delightful it was in one's childhood to see one's own father being a success in such trying circumstances! One cheered in one's soul as he, habitually a silent man, awoke out of his silence into the most fascinating conversationalist, made jokes that were good jokes, and told stories of his experiences that were better than a book. There was no personal triumph to surpass the triumph of having such a father as this. To see the faces of one's friends brightening made, I am sure, one's own face bright. Some children, on the other hand, even children who are devoted to their fathers, accustom themselves from an early age to the knowledge that their fathers are imperfect creatures whose faults must be put up with as the decree of destiny. I knew one boy whose father, an excellent and interesting man, had the fault of talking too much and of telling a story at twice the length at which it ought to have been told. The boy never showed the slightest irritation, as many boys would have done. When the father had lost his bearings in the middle of an apparently endless anecdote, the boy would merely say, with a smile, "Ring off, governor!" and turn the conversation to another subject. It is not in every home, however, that the long-winded elderly and the impatient young are on such good terms as to be able to face such a situation, not only once, but again and again, without getting to dislike each other. I should myself have been tempted to play the Roman father in such circumstances. For a man may forgive many wrongs, but he cannot easily forgive anyone who makes it plain that his conversation is tedious. "We can forgive those who bore us," said La Rochefoucauld; "we cannot forgive those whom we bore." It was, I suppose, my sense of the enormity of the implied accusation that made me, even in the midst of an unusually

long anecdote, always sympathize with the long-winded father even more warmly than I agreed with the "Ring off, governor!" of the boy.

I cannot say that I set out for the school with any intention of making my niece proud of me, but I was buoyed up by the hope that I should not actually disgrace her. As a matter of fact, I do not think there was any chance of di-gracing her, unless one had risen from one's chair and made a scene. The shy man usually finds that he has been shy without a cause, and that, in practice, no one takes the slightest notice of him. Sitting in the back row against the wall, indeed, I could watch the children, all costumed as for the stage, going through their dances, their songs, and their plays in almost complete self-forgetfulness, without even troubling to look round to see how the shy fathers were getting on.

To see a play performed by small children with a few footlights arranged on the floor in imitation of a theatre, *is to feel that all that the saints have said about children is true.* How exquisite are their voices, that are all music without the harshness of experience! To listen to them is like listening to the first birds. To see them is to be back in a world of apple-trees in flower. There is comedy in the contrast between them and the grave parts they play and the grave speeches they utter as abbesses, poets, and harpers. But the very mimicry of our grown-up world, which begins by moving us, ends by filling us with bitter-sweet regret that the lives of men and women, after all, are not enacted in voices so sweet and by creatures so fair as these. The feeling may not be a deep one, and may be only for the moment; but for the time at least, we wish with a pang that life could always have remained like this, that nobody would ever grow up or die, but that

the very kings and admirals and prime ministers and thieves and shopkeepers were all children. It may be that, from the point of view of those who have passed into further æons of existence, kings and admirals and prime ministers and thieves and shopkeepers are so. Who knows but that, in immortal eyes, a conqueror marching from ruined kingdom to ruined kingdom may be but a small boy with a toy sword at his side? After all, the grey-haired and the bald play their parts in almost as complete innocence of what they are doing as these children, who at least know that it is all a game. And, indeed, the contrast between a child of twelve and a grown-up human being is scarcely greater than the contrast between a child of five or six and a child of twelve. I had never realized the enormous gap between six and twelve till a band of little six-year-old dancers came on to the stage with solemn feet and solemn faces and went through their steps in the middle of a half-circle of girls, none of whom was older than twelve and none younger than ten. Kings, Puritans, Cavaliers, mackerel-sellers, and cut-purses of twelve seemed six feet high in comparison with these midget elves. They, too, seemed infinitely small and of a perfect age when they were on the stage alone, but the children of six had only to appear in order to let us see that there was an age still nearer perfection. Not that I should care to be dogmatic on this point. It may be only a passing ripple of sentimentalism that makes one wish that all the world were of so doll-like a stature as this, and that the very editor of "The Times" were a little fellow of six. There are others, perhaps, who would regard the little elf of six as a giant compared to the sleeping infant in long clothes—the infant in the comet stage, as Meredith saw it. The child in the cradle is, for many people, the eternal

Sleeping Beauty, and if one may judge by religious art, it is the age that to men of imagination has seemed most divine. I confess I am content with six—nay, with seven or eight, or nine, or ten, or eleven, or twelve. And, perhaps, there may be something to be said for any age up to sixteen, or even twenty, or, at a stretch, thirty, and if you advance the age to forty I shall not quarrel with you. There is, within these limits, no year that would not be better if it lasted at least three years; but I am not sure that, at the age of six, a year should not last ten. It may be that if all these children, six and twelve alike, had not been doomed to grow old, I should not have been so moved at the spectacle of their grace and the sweet sound of their voices. And if I myself had remained at their age, I might only have squabbled with them and seen some of them not as angels but with a hostile eye. Hence all may be for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and it may be that to be an uncle appears as wonderful a destiny to a little girl of ten as to be a little girl of ten seems to an uncle. In any case I shall tell my niece that I think the perfect age is not six, but ten. An uncle has only one duty—to make himself popular with his nephews and nieces.

ON BEING RATHER ILL

THERE are people who seem positively to benefit from an illness. They grow in moral stature as they dwindle in physical health. A well-known journalist wrote an article recently, in which he described how, as he lay ill of influenza, all his wasted years passed before his imagination so that he was filled with a determination to become a better man. I envied him as I read, for I, too, was ill at the time and should have liked to think that my sufferings were doing me some good. But, alas, when I am ill, it is not so much my past as my present that troubles me. I repent of my sins most easily when I am feeling fairly well. When I am ill I am far more interested in what the doctor hears through the stethoscope than in the flutterings of my conscience. I do not mean to say that I never feel the slight pang that is the symptom of a desire for a better life. But almost any other ache can make me forget it. I am not one of those moral giants who can enjoy a bad conscience and a bad toothache at the same time. I am not sure, indeed, that illness does not entirely unfit me for the higher life. I become self-centred, impatient, incapable of even a moderately noble thought. There are invalids who, when they are in pain, try to hide the fact from other people. I, on the contrary, like other people to know about my sufferings. I am even, I suspect, inclined to exaggerate them. If a friend calls, I at once tell him where the pain is, what the doctor said, and the still worse things I discovered in the medical dictionary. There is no use in anyone's coming to see me when I am ill if he wishes to talk about the style of Plato or the rhythm of Sir Thomas Browne. I do not object

to a little light gossip, but even that wearies if he does not pause now and then to say something about the matter which is occupying my thoughts, which is my illness. It is true that conversation with an invalid about his illness should be tactful. The visitor, on coming into the room, if he has been to see you before, should say, "You're looking a lot better." Long before M. Coué was ever heard of, invalids were made new men by that simple formula. Again, as often as you have deftly worked the conversation back to yourself and your illness, the visitor should find an opportunity to interject some such remark as "You're a much better colour to-day," or "You've lost that puffy look," or "Your eye seems almost normal." I cannot commend the bedside manner of a portrait painter who came to see me, and, on hearing what I was suffering from, said, "You knew old Fudge, didn't you? That's what he had. I remember, when I was painting him, Dr. So-and-So pointed out the symptoms to me." Then, in a jaunty vein of reminiscence, "He was dead in six months." Now, all men are mortal, and old Fudge was a man; therefore old Fudge was mortal. But I do not think the sick-room is the place for rubbing these things in. What I want, when I am ill, is to be made to look on the bright side of things—to hear about the old Fudges who recovered and lived till they were ninety. On the day after the gruesome reminiscences of the painter, I was to be the victim of another conversation equally tactless. I was allowed to get up and was lying on a sofa, wondering whether I should be able to get to Ascot, when Mrs. Apjohn, the cook, put her head round the door. "Excuse me, sir," she said: "you won't mind if I speak to you?" "Not a bit," said I, thinking she had some complaint to make and that she could find no one else to make it to. She

came a yard or two into the room, and, looking a little nervous, said, "You *will* take care of yourself, sir, won't you?" "Oh, yes. Rather," I said, surprised almost into inarticulateness; "I'm feeling all right again." She lowered her eyelids sadly. "Mr. Apjohn," she said slowly, looking at the floor, "didn't take care of himself, and I lost him. You won't mind my speaking, sir?" "Good gracious, no," I assured her; "it's very good of you." But, as she turned her back and walked slowly out of the room, I seized my pipe and smoked like a steam-engine for some minutes till the effect of her words had partly worn off.

On the whole, I think, doctors are the best company when one is moderately ill. I liked even the big, bullying, white-bearded specialist who mistook me during the war for a conscientious objector because I had not had my hair cut, and jeered at the notion that there was anything whatever the matter with me. He kept on talking about conscientious objectors, while what I wanted to talk about was my heart. "There's many a man thinks he has a conscience," he declared gruffly, "when all that's the matter with him is that he needs a blue pill." I tried to disembarass him of the idea that I had a conscience, but he only grunted and looked at me as suspiciously as an angry bull. "Are you sure?" he said, in a strong Scottish accent; "do you never think that *you're* right and that everybody else is wrong?" "Oh, often," I admitted, in some surprise—for, indeed, it was a *notion* that had often occurred to me. "I thought so," he said, nodding his head and staring at me gloomily; "do you ever feel the world's going straight to the devil?" "Yes, rather," I assured him, as genially as I could. "Aye," he said, nodding disgustedly, "I thought so. Come here," he bade me sternly; and he led me over to the corner of the con-

sulting room where a portrait of Carlyle was hanging on the wall. He waved his arm vehemently at the face of the wicked old dyspeptic in the picture. "Take off the beard," he roared at me, "and there ye are. Stummick! Stummick! Stummick!" There are men who would have been humiliated by such outrageous behaviour on the part of a doctor who was charging three guineas for his insults; but, as for me, I was delighted to hear the opinion that there was nothing seriously wrong with me expressed in such vigorous language. The old doctor also pleased me because, as often as I mentioned what I considered a rather alarming symptom, he brushed it aside with a mocking laugh and declared that he had had it himself since he was eighteen years old. As he showed me to the doorstep he told me, if I couldn't get into the Army, to go for a row every morning on the pond in Regent's Park. I confess, when he said that, I began to sympathize with Naaman the leper. I always expect a doctor to give me at least a bottle, for it is much easier to drink "one sixteenth part three times a day after meals" than to row a boat in a London park. I am one of those people who row windmill-fashion, and in whose hands the oars describe huge circles instead of skimming like swallows along the surface of the water. In the circumstances there was nothing to be done but to consult another specialist who would give me a more sensible prescription. I found one without much difficulty, who ordered me to drink claret with my meals. "A man like you needs a stimulant," he declared with a firmness that impressed me. I found drinking claret much easier than rowing a boat in Regent's Park. Would that all doctors would remember how frail a creature is man, and would order their patients to do something that is within ordinary human capacity!

As a matter of fact, I rather like obeying a doctor's orders, if only they are reasonable and do not interfere too much with my habits. It gives me positive pleasure to be told to drink white wine instead of red, or to substitute orange juice for milk in my tea. To carry out instructions of this kind is like playing a new game. And, besides, I can easily persuade myself that I prefer orange juice to milk and white wine to red. On the whole, I think, the most interesting of all cures are those which rearrange one's diet. Every meal becomes pleasantly full of little rocks and shoals that have to be skilfully steered past—soup, fried fish, rice pudding, fruit, coffee. What, you may ask, is left to eat? But, indeed, I have never known a diet that did not mainly consist in avoiding the things one did not like. Who really cares for soup? Who for rice pudding? These are but a legacy from barbarous ages. I am content if a doctor leaves me a meal of two dishes, and I do not much mind what these are, provided they are not boiled cod and blancmange. But, to be honest, I also expect a doctor to give me something in a bottle. I have seldom known a bottle that did not make me feel a great deal better within twenty-four hours. There is no other such convenient way of regaining health. The fine thing about taking medicine is that it wastes no time. To be told to chew one's food is in comparison to be set a Herculean task. It is, so far as my experience goes, impossible to chew and at the same time to enjoy one's meals. The very act of chewing gives a man a sullen, selfish air and makes him look like a sulky cow. Conversation and chewing do not go together. Conversation is possible at meals, indeed, only because the best people do not chew. As soon as you begin chewing you are lost as a social being. The great Fletcher ended, you will remem-

ber, by chewing—or as he called it, insalivating—even wine. It may be, of course, that men, like cows, were intended to eat their meals in silence, or, at least, with no noise but of munching. Man is the only animal, I believe, who pretends he is thinking of other things while he is eating. Compare a number of human beings at the table with a number of hens and chickens at the trough, and you will see how far man has travelled from the simplicities of the poultry-yard. The fowl makes no pretence that it is eating for any other reason than to satisfy its hunger. Man, on the other hand, is so ashamed of his appetite that he would blush to be caught abstracting delicacies from his neighbour's plate, as a chicken or any child of nature would do. At the same time, this pretence of indifference to food—of not minding your neighbour's having taken a larger or more attractive portion of chicken—is what has made man civilized. And if he is taught to think so much about his food as positively to chew it, I cannot see how he can fail to revert to barbarism. Hence I trust the doctors will stick to their old-fashioned bottles of medicine, and to pills, plasters and poultices, all of which are consistent with the enjoyment of the finer pleasures of the table.

The great charm of medicine is that it is so easy to take it. It is not like being told to walk to the office every day, or to perform physical exercises after one's bath, or to go to bed at ten, or to take a holiday at Carlsbad. The doctor who is not content to be a medicine-man, or magician, adds immeasurably to the difficulties of being an invalid. In my secret heart, I agree with all he says about fresh air, exercise, chewing, and moderation in tobacco. But let him not deceive himself into thinking that he is not giving me the very deuce of a time—the very deuce of a time. On this note of querulousness I end.

THE LIFE OF SENSATIONS

THERE is nothing that destroys the excitement of motoring more surely than good roads and careful driving. Luckily in France—at least, in the part of France in which I have been studying the rainfall during a typical twentieth-century summer—good roads are few and careful drivers would be warned by the police as obstructors of the traffic. The main roads are in a good many places much as they were when Julius Cæsar divided Gaul into three parts. They do not merely contain ruts and hollows as large as a baby's bath. They are also full of deep pits—pits so deep that you dare scarcely look over the edge for fear of feeling giddy. If you did look into one of them, you would need a telescope to see to the bottom, and probably you would then descry the tiny figure of a man who, having fallen in, had been vainly calling for help for days. If you drive over this kind of road even at thirty miles an hour, you enjoy all the ups and downs of the roughest kind of Channel crossing. The very swish of a wheel through one of the flooded pits produces a wave that washes right over the rocking car. As the French chauffeur plunges ahead, his eyes are alight with a fierce excitement, and he keeps calling to you through the roar and rattle of the storm: "C'est très dangereux, monsieur—très dangereux." You shout back, "Oui," and hope that, now that he has noticed it, he will slow down a little. But he goes swiftly ahead, shouting things about "les grands trous" and "les bosses" and, as the car is swung sideways by one of them, excitedly screams: "Voilà," and puts on the accelerator. He goes on repeating that

these are "très mauvaises routes" and shouting, "très dangereux" in a crescendo till you begin to see the worlds in capital letters. You flash past a signpost warning you that a crossing is coming. The sign looks horribly like the crossbones in a letter threatening death. Again you hope that he has noticed it, but you don't know the French for "crossroads" and so cannot ask him. He puts on speed in the evident determination not to let any car coming in a sideways direction pass the crossing before him. You rise a little in your seat to try to see over the hedges that hide the sideroads from your view. You prick your ears for the sound of approaching wheels or the honk of a horn. You try to make up your mind whether in the event of a collision the car that is going faster is the one that is likely to do the more damage or to suffer it. To do it, you hope. You are now past the crossing in safety, and you sink back in your seat in a luxury of reaction. You begin to take an interest in the needle of the speedometer which swings and sways between 70 and 80. It certainly seems very fast, and, as you turn the kilometres into miles in your head, you realize that it is even faster than you feared. You wish the chauffeur would not be quite so reckless. Suppose a tyre should burst. As you fly past, an elderly peasant skips out of the way and falls back against a ditch, waving a stick and cursing. You agree with the elderly peasant. Just then, miles ahead of you along the sand-coloured road, you see a speck no bigger than a midge. The chauffeur sees it too, and puts on the accelerator. Gradually, it becomes about the size of a fly. The chauffeur becomes excited and puts on the accelerator again. You dash forward, at such a pace that you scarcely know whether you are passing dry land or sea, and the speck in the distance increases to the largeness of a man's hand. You now

know that it is another motor-car and that you are chasing it. You begin somehow to long to overtake it. The motor-car ahead of you must be going at about sixty miles an hour. You wonder whether your own man couldn't do seventy. Joy, you are catching up. The car takes a flying leap into the air, and you do not know for the moment whether it will fall on its feet or its side or upside down. "Un grand trou," shouts the chauffeur when you have reached the earth again. "Très dangereux," you shout back with enthusiasm, holding on your hat. "Très dangereux," he replies in the same spirit, accelerating the accelerator. "Chassez," you shout to him encouragingly. "Oui, monsieur," he replies, kicking something to see if he can make the car go faster. Happily, he can, and the other car becomes larger and larger as the road becomes hilly, and you pursue it, making a noise like a fleet of battleplanes shaving the roofs of a town. It disappears round a curve and over the crest of a hill. You follow, and perceive it flying down the hill at a pace that has never yet been achieved outside the pages of fiction. You give chase, the four wheels off the ground, reaching the bottom of the hill in a whirl of resolve either to overtake the enemy or to perish in the attempt, and in another kilometre you are on its heels, the stones flying against your mudguards and the speedometer rocking backwards and forwards as though it were recording the beatings of an exhausted heart. Neck and neck, you pass a crossroad together with its sign of dead men's bones. And, after that, with another access of speed, you honk your horn victoriously, and sweep past, like a Rolls-Royce overtaking a taxi-cab. Your car seems just to kiss the mudguard of the other as it flies past. "Très dangereux," you call out breathlessly. "Très dangereux," the chauff-

feur agrees with a happy smile. "Très mauvaises routes," you say to him ecstatically. "Oui, oui, très mauvaises routes," he replies, and puts on the accelerator. "Des grands trous," you shout. "Voilà," he cries, as the car, having just escaped from one, rears and bucks.

But, alas, it is impossible in English prose to convey the excitement of motoring in France. It is at once extraordinarily terrifying and extraordinarily pleasant. You keep thinking "If I live through this, it will be great fun." But you never feel quite certain that you will live through it. And, when you come to one of those steep, narrow, corkscrew roads, that go downhill for miles and miles—roads that are marked with a "Z" on the signposts—you are prepared for the worst at every turn of the road. You also wish that the chauffeur did not think it necessary to take both hands off the wheel and gesticulate every time he speaks. You say to him, "Beaucoup de tournes—très brusques." Immediately, he is waving both hands in the air to express his opinion of the turns, and only takes the wheel again in time to twist round the next bend. "Très dangereux," you cry to him, when your heart has recovered from its dropped beat. He again takes both hands from the wheel, waves them above his head, repeating, "Très—très dangereux!" and seizes the wheel just in time to duck under the bow of a suddenly-appearing charabanc. In the end you decide that it is safer not to address him at all, and you do not until he goes bumping over a railway crossing after a sharp turn, while three women in black fly screaming from under the wheels. The chauffeur is indignant, and calls out: "Je ne l'ai pas vu." You call back, "Très dangereux." "Très dangereux," he yells frantically, and speeds on towards the next crossroads. Luckily, there are comparatively few

people who use motor-cars in France, and most of the cross-roads are bare of hedges, so that one had a good chance of seeing an approaching vehicle before the collision has occurred. Still, so far as I could see, every motorist takes it for granted that the other motorists will take all the steps necessary to avoid the collision. Our chauffeur certainly drove as though there were not another vehicle on the roads of France, and, if we had not an accident, it was only because there was nothing to run into at the really dangerous places. The worst of it was that the chauffeur kept giving me statistics of the various accidents that had taken place at various "dangereux" corners and that my French is so bad that I could not be sure whether five people were killed at such and such a spot every day, or only every year. I shall really have to learn French before I risk another motor-ride along the French roads. Disciples of M. Coué will realize how unnerving it is to carry on a prolonged conversation consisting of little more than a repetition of the words, "Très dangereux."

But how safe it felt to be back at dinner in the hotel! How delicious the soup tasted! How mellow the vin ordinaire! After dinner, somebody proposed to tell fortunes by cards, but I firmly refused to be led back out of my sense of sweet security into a life of sensations with aces of spades and dark women casting a cloud over the future. "Then what about planchette?" I was asked. I shrink from dealings with spirits, but I hate being a spoil-sport, so consented, and in a few minutes an alphabet had been placed in a ring round the table and we were all pressing a finger lightly on an inverted wine glass in the centre. The glass began to stir uneasily, and, on being spoken to and asked who it was, it slowly spelt out the name, "Clemence Dane." It said that it wanted to talk

about books, and, on being asked what it thought of Mr. Forster's "Passage to India," replied: "Good, but have not read it." It then became frivolous, and, to every question that was addressed to it, replied with the one word, "Cabbage." If you asked its opinion of anybody, it immediately spelt out either "Cabbage" or "A bad cabbage," as though it were determined on mocking us. As all present had given their words of honour not to push or pull the glass, it may be assumed that none of them was deliberately trifling, but the nonsense became so monotonous in the end that we bade the spirit farewell and called up another in its stead. We asked the new spirit who it was, and it replied: "A fay." We asked it what it wished to talk to us about, and to our horror the glass immediately spelt out the words, "A bad cabbage." One lady went pale and said: "This may be a warning." Another declared that cabbage was a vegetable never served at the hotel, and that the whole thing was absurd. We pursued our investigations, however, and were told that the cabbage was to appear during dinner on the following evening, and that none of us must on any account touch it. Being of a humane disposition, we asked: "But what about the other people in the hotel? Won't they be in danger, too?" The glass spelt "Yes." "And, if a cabbage appears, must we tell them not to eat it?" The glass spelt: "You must warn." "But surely," we protested, "Madame P."—the hotel-keeper's wife—"will be very much annoyed with us?" The glass replied: "You must vex." It is all very well to mock at human credulity, but I am convinced that every one of us was apprehensive during all that night and all the next day lest a cabbage should appear at the evening meal, and one of us should have to rise and denounce it in public. I certainly was

feeling ill at ease during the first two courses of the dinner, though I knew very well that, if a cabbage did appear, the task of denouncing it would be deputed to a woman. Then, as the vegetables were being brought in, a girl who had a good view of the door suddenly cried: "Look, it is cabbage after all." Everyone at the table started and stared at everybody else with a wild surmise, till someone had the courage to look round and in a moment uttered a cry of joy: "No, it's only runner beans." Once again, as during the motor-ride, we enjoyed the blessed relief of those who have escaped disaster by the skin of their teeth. We called for a *vieille cure*, and another one, that evening with a good conscience. And after that we went to another room and had a long and interesting conversation with the spirit of Alcibiades.

THE IDEA

IF you go to the south of France in January, you will be less than human if you are not charmed by the spectacle of the orange-trees with their brilliant ripe fruits hanging like toys among the little green leaves. The orange-tree seems to concentrate in itself every delightful thing that we mean by the south. It is not only a tree but an image. It is as though each individual fruit hanging in its branches were a small shining sun. If you were writing home, you would only need to say that there was an orange-tree heavy with fruit in the garden below your bedroom-window in order to conjure up a picture of seas and rivers flowing into them, extravagantly blue, of a world that glowed with flowers, of indolence in day-long sunshine, of birds singing the songs of April and May while it is still winter. As for eating an orange freshly plucked from the tree, how desirable it seems! How pleasant to see the little mandarin nestling among its leaves on the fruit-dish! It is as attractive as a fruit out of a legend. You feel that it would be worth travelling hundreds of miles merely to eat such a fruit in such a setting.

And yet, after eating many oranges in such circumstances for the first time in my life, I must confess with regret that an orange fresh from the tree is not half so wonderful as the idea of an orange fresh from the tree. There are few things in the world more disappointing than these mandarins, or tangerines—for I think a mandarin is only an inferior tangerine—that mean so much to the imagination and so little to the palate. You could buy

far better oranges in a London shop. One good Jaffa orange is worth a dozen mandarins. Yet, somehow, the act of eating a Jaffa orange in London does not excite the fancy. A large orange, eaten in town, may satisfy the palate, but it leaves the imagination cold. So delightful is the idea of eating an orange fresh from the tree, however, that not even after a score of disappointments has one the heart to refuse the small crumpled fruit that is served at the end of every meal. Tangerines, it must also be admitted, make an irresistible appeal to the imagination even when one is not in an orange-growing country. Most of us, I am sure, have loved them from childhood. Perhaps, it is because they themselves are so tiny that they seem properties of the world of childhood. When we are children, we love everything that is small as we ourselves are small. We love Shetland ponies more than thoroughbreds, ducklings more than geese, kittens more than elephants. The larger things, much as we like them, are of a piece with the lives of serious and grown-up people. The little things are natural playthings, and we feel at play when we look at them or touch them. That, I think, rather than their exceptional fragrance, or the sweetness of their juices, is the explanation of our love of tangerines. Their size is so charming, indeed, that, while we remain children, we resolutely refuse to admit that we have been disappointed just a little in eating them. At that age we can still eat with our imaginations, and our palates do not argue with and contradict us. If an orange is small and is wrapped in silver paper, that is enough for us. Given so much, we can pretend the rest. For, us it is the diet of Paradise so long as it looks as if it were the diet of Paradise. I do not, I may say, wish to decry the tangerine as a fruit not worth eating. The flavour is agreeable enough, though

not so agreeable as the smell. But, with all its virtues, the tangerine remains one of the inferior oranges, with an excess of seeds and a deficiency of liquor. I am sure there are many people who will contradict me on this point. All children will, and nearly all men and women who have preserved the happy childish gift of enjoying things without judging them—relying on memory and imagination rather than on the palate and supplying all the shortcomings of reality with good-natured make-belief. Heaven forbid that I should destroy their illusions even about tangerines! But we who have been disillusioned must communicate our disillusion to each other. We do not boast: we merely confess. It is to our sorrow that we know with Plato that the perfect orange—the orange of the idea—hangs not on any tree in any earthly garden but exists only in Heaven.

Nor is the orange the only food of man that is more beautiful in the idea than in reality. The enjoyment of many of the things we eat and drink lies in the anticipation. How seldom does a cup of coffee equal the idea of a cup of coffee! Who does not love coffee as an idea? Who is not continually disappointed by coffee as a fact? If most of us go on drinking coffee, it is because we live in the perpetual pursuit of an idea, not because we have much hope that the next cup of coffee is going to be a good one. We know from experience that there is as much difference between the coffee we drink in restaurants and the coffee we drink in our imaginations as there is between war-time beer and nectar. But such idealists are mortals that we go on drinking it in restaurants, on railway trains, and even in lodgings. We should lose heart, perhaps, and take to milder liquors if it were not that every now and then we do get a cup of coffee in which the idea of coffee seems almost to have been realized on earth. How proud our host is as

he explains how perfection was achieved ! He talks as a teacher, like the wise men of old. At such a moment, surrounded by listening guests, he would not change places with Socrates. I doubt, however, if even he can make the perfect coffee except occasionally and by a happy accident.

He remains a man puffed-up for the rest of his days, but, when we visit him again, the secret has vanished, and, though his guests praise him with lies, they pity him as a man who is living among illusions. If statistics could be compiled on the subject, I am sure it would be found that not more than one cup of coffee in a thousand that are made deserves to be called even tolerable. The rest are but a warm infusion with which we still our cravings. Sometimes, they smell like perfect coffee, and, if coffee were a perfume and not a drink, we should be happy. But, for the most part, they are of such a kind as, if a doctor were present and ordered us to harden our arteries with the poison no more, would make it easy for us to resolve to obey him.

Luckily for themselves, most human beings do not trust their palates on such matters, but easily find in food or drink the excellence they expect to find. If they are told that the coffee at such and such a restaurant is always good, it will always be good to them. They are the happy victims of suggestion. If they go to France, expecting the cheaper wines to be wonderful, they will praise enthusiastically wines such as you could get cheaply enough in the worst London wineshops. Our pleasure in wine is largely pleasure in an idea. Few of us have a skilled palate in wine ; I, for one, have not. I divide wines into two broad categories—wines that are drinkable and wines that aren't, like the Australian burgundy that I bought the other day. But I have heard men saying " Jolly good wine " as they drank

a liquor that it would have been shameful to use as a rat-poison—nay, as a weed-killer. These are the idealists of the table in the ordinary sense of the word "idealists." They are people who can mistake the most loathsome reality for the heavenly perfection of an idea. We all share their happiness to some extent, for we are all to some extent slaves of suggestion. I am in the unfortunate position, however, of being one of those people to whom it is easier to suggest that a thing is bad than that a thing is good. You could not make me enjoy eating a stale egg merely by saying, "What a beautifully fresh egg!" But you could stop me from eating a fresh egg by saying, "That egg smells as if it were stale." Imagination can taint food for me more easily than it can sweeten it. The idea of a bad egg is so disgusting that it would outweigh the reality of the egg's freshness. But I do not find the idea of a fresh egg so intoxicating that it can make me forget that the egg is really stale.

Among foods that belong to the realm of ideas rather than of realities, I think, must be counted cakes of all sorts. I can see no other reason why one who loved cakes so greedily as I once loved them now cares so little for them. I still like the idea of a cake. I like to look into a confectioner's window. I like to go into a teashop, and, when I do, I have the ancient childish belief that the cakes on the other tables are beautiful. I am enough of an idealist to believe in the excellence of almost any cake that is out of reach. But no sooner is a cake on my own plate than I know it to be a deceiver. This is not the fair idea for which I hungered. This is a base compost of flour and sugar that may be a remedy against starvation, but that does not feed the mind. Some men gild their past with the belief that cakes are not so good as they used to be, but it seems to

me more likely that cakes have remained the same, but that it is we who have changed. As children we ate, not cakes, but ideas ; now we eat, not ideas, but cakes. . We sought perfection and found only commonness. It is the old story. Gods and men, we are all deluded thus. Go over all the things you think you would like to eat and drink, and you will find that, in most cases, what you would like to eat or drink is not the thing in itself but the idea of the thing. There are few things but oysters and Pencau's sardines that survive the test of experience. Even salmon, I fancy, dwells in an ambiguous borderland among the things that are almost realities but the beauty of which is too often only the enticing beauty of the idea. The conclusion of the matter is that, if one is really fond of food, it is better to read a cookery book than to go out to dinner. In the cookery-book the most high-minded idealist will never be disappointed.

THE NEW CAT

CATS are the enemies of conversation. I have a friend who, after an absence of many years, has lately settled down in London, with a wife, a cat and a garden. Owing to the cat, I doubt if our friendship can continue. I called to see him and was shown into the garden, where he and his wife were sitting in deck chairs. How many things there were that I wished to talk to him about! How happily I looked forward to hearing the names of old friends and old places on his lips and to telling him all the news of the deaths and divorces that had taken place since he had been lost to civilization in Buenos Aires! I even looked forward to meeting his wife, though I do not on the whole like my friends to marry. We had hardly shaken hands and sat down, however, when he glanced at his wife with a look of alarm and said, "Where's Oliver Cromwell?" His wife looked round the garden apprehensively and began calling, "Olly! Olly! Olly!" and, when there was no answer, said: "Where can he have gone?" Then followed an excited dialogue of this kind: "He can't have got through the fence into the next garden." "I saw him only a minute ago." "Perhaps, he's in the ash. He was up there when I came out this morning, and I had to fetch the ladder to bring him down." "Olly, Olly, Olly!" (in a woman's voice). "Oliver Cromwell! Oliver Cromwell!" (in a man's shout). "Oh, there he is, coming out of the lupin!" "Naughty Oliver Cromwell, where have you been?" "Puss, puss, puss, puss!" "Where's the ball, Stella? Here you are, Oliver, here's something to play with. You mustn't interrupt the

conversation, you know," and he rolled the ball gently over the grass. The kitten watched it, fascinated. It flattened itself on the grass, stretched out its neck, cocked its ears, stared with wide eyes, and moved its tail in cruel anticipation. Then it dashed towards the ball, and, just as it reached it, made a sideways spring with arched back and avoided it, and sat down and began to lick its right foreleg from the knee downwards, as though it had forgotten all about the ball. "Well," said my friend with self-satisfaction, "what do you think of Oliver Cromwell? Isn't he a beauty?" I agreed that he was. "Look, look," his wife interrupted us, and, as the kitten began to flatten himself into position for another rush at the ball, she gurgled as if to herself: "Oh, he was *such* a darling! He was *such* a darling!" This time the kitten did leap on to the ball, caught it in its front paws, lifted it in the air, turned a back somersault with it, rolled on the grass, and then, as if in terror, fled for all it was worth into the Solomon's seal in the flower border, and, hidden among the stalks, looked out on its late prey, like a tiger concealing itself in the jungle. These evolutions were received by my friend and my friend's wife with shouts of laughter. My friend said that they ought really to have called the kitten Cinquevalli. The way it juggled with the ball, he declared, was simply wonderful. "It was *such* a clever little cat," his wife began to talk to herself again; "much cleverer than Cinquevalli. Oh, *much* cleverer," she declared, reaching out her hand and taking the kitten into her lap. As she stroked it, it padded up and down with its paws on her dress, arched its back at every stroke of her hand, and purred. My friend watched it in a state of fatuous and happy idolatry. I half-expected him and his wife to begin purring at any moment, too. It was

obvious that the purring of the kitten had a hypnotic effect on them, and I doubt if either of them remembered that I was present.

A housemaid came out with the tea-things, and she, too, when she had put the tray down, looked at the kitten with fatuous and idolatrous eyes. It seemed to be with difficulty that she tore herself away eventually, and, even when she reached the house, she looked back as if she could scarcely bear to leave the wonderful presence. "You remember Jack Robinson's cats?" I said to my friend as a way of getting back to normal conversation, so that I could ask him whether he had heard of poor Jack's death in a yachting accident. "I hope," said his wife, "that you're not going to pretend that anybody ever had such a perfectly wonderful cat as Oliver Cromwell. Because," she added, rubbing the kitten under the chin, "we simply won't believe it. Isn't that so, Oliver?" "Poor old Jack," I began again, "——." "I never understood his passion for cats," said my friend, "—at least, not till we got this little beast." "You mustn't call Oliver Cromwell a little beast," protested his wife. "You heard about Jack's death?" I said. "Jack dead! No. How? Look out!" he roared, as the kitten sprang from his wife's lap and made after a bee across the grass. "I always thought kittens had more sense than to chase bees. He'll get stung some day. Poor old Jack!" as the bee—and the kitten—escaped; "this is the first I heard of it." I told him how the accident had taken place—how Jack had been knocked overboard, apparently stunned, for he had sunk like a stone. His wife, I presume, was not listening, for, as at the end of my story he and I were sunk in a momentary silence, she broke in with: "I declare he's caught a bee this time. Poor little pet! Poor, silly,

your ball and leave us in peace for a few minutes. I told you you mustn't interrupt the conversation."

But what cat ever cared what anybody told it? I did succeed in the course of the afternoon in telling Tom how one friend had become a County Court judge, and another a doctor, and how another was making a fortune as a journalist in America. But I did it to a constant accompaniment of "Pussy, pussy, pussy!" "Olly, Olly, Olly!" "He's rolling on the nemophila. Go and take him off, Tom," "I do love a cat when its tail stands up like a note of interrogation," "Naughty Oliver Cromwell! you mustn't try to catch sparrows," that made me feel as exhausted as if I had been shouting for hours to a deaf man in a gale. "Come again soon," said my friend's wife, as we shook hands. "Mind, we expect you every Sunday," said Tom heartily. "Come back, Oliver Cromwell," his wife's voice reached us as we disappeared. "Take care that he doesn't get out of the front door, Tom."

I am myself an admirer of cats, but I do not like them as part of a conversation. I do not think that cats should be spoken to in the presence of visitors. They should be seen and not talked about. Whether I shall be able to live up to these principles, however, now that a perfectly wonderful kitten has come to live in my house, I do not know. It is so charming, so fearless, so restless, so playful. There were already two small black cats in the house. One of them was a stray, given to us by the butcher. Its ears are three times the ordinary size, and it has a tail like a rat, so that one does not draw the attention of visitors to it, but it is so gentle, so free from malice—except against birds and insects—that one cannot help liking it. The other, Mrs. Blacktoes, is very beautiful and very cross. She came into the house one night when we were calling Felix, and she has stayed

BED-KNOBS

DO you need bed-knobs, scissors . . . ? " I forget how the rest of the notice ran—I saw it only for an instant above a shop from the top of a bus in Camden Town. Scissors, of course, everybody needs, but has Camden Town really such an appetite for bed-knobs as would justify this order of precedence in an ironmonger's advertisement? I send down a hook to the bottom of my memory, but I cannot recall a single occasion on which I needed a bed-knob so desperately as to go out and buy one. And yet the question, "Do you need bed-knobs?" seems curiously inviting. Perhaps the children of the Camden Town streets find it irresistible, for children have always been fascinated by bed-knobs. It is possible that some of them, more imaginative than the rest, having sixpence to spend, will lay it out on a bright gold bed-knob even in preference to brandy balls or liquorice laces or whatever the young eat nowadays. The nineteenth century has many sins to answer for, but children should always hold it in grateful remembrance as the century which filled the world with iron bedsteads, decorated at the four corners with brass knobs. There is on general grounds, I agree, little to be said for iron bedsteads, but is the modern return to wood in the bedroom, pleasant though it is to the eye, quite fair to the rising generation? There is an extraordinary satisfaction to be got under the age of ten from unscrewing a knob from the foot of the bed and screwing it on again. It is a satisfaction that lasts many years after the child has ceased to take any interest in seeing whether it can get its toe into its mouth. The game of twisting

back the leg till the toe reaches the mouth is a good game in its season, especially if played against a rival, but its joys are manifestly fleeting and of brief date. Bed-knobs remain, when one has put away and almost forgotten such childish pleasures, as something for which it is worth waking up in the morning. Even before one got up and dressed it was a temptation to slide down to the foot of the bed and to begin screwing the knobs off. (Surely, by the way, there should be some worthier name for those globes of gold that, like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, guarded the four corners of one's infant slumbers.) One's bed might have either round knobs or tall, grooved, quasi-conical knobs. The grooved knob was more interesting in itself and in the oddity of its shape, but the round knob was on the whole to be preferred, for it was not only a knob but a mirror. You could look at yourself in it as in a mirror, as you can look at yourself in a spoon or a silver teapot. Bed-posts, spoons and teapots, it seems to me, are the most desirable of all kinds of mirror for the young, because they encourage curiosity rather than vanity. You are not tempted to admire yourself in the back of a spoon. That lean face narrowing at one end to a still leaner and cretinous brow, that bulbous projection of nose, that body far too tiny for so large-nosed and elongated a countenance—these are no flatterers. Bring your face nearer the spoon, and your nose swells beyond Disraeli's—nay, beyond Cyrano's. Luckily for your peace of mind, when you are a child it never enters your head to say to yourself: "Suppose that is what I really look like. Suppose it is the back of the spoon, and not the mirror, that tells me the truth. Suppose that is how the angels see me." The experience of the eye, no doubt, confirms the report of the mirror against that of the spoon. But who knows for

certain that the eye is not a deceiver, leading us to folly and destruction? Had Narcissus but looked at himself in the back of a spoon instead of in the pool, he might have been a wiser and a sadder man. And I am not sure that, in real life, the back of the spoon does not reflect Narcissus more accurately than the beguiling water.

Even if you look at yourself in the inside of a spoon, you will see nothing that is likely to make you faint with admiration of so nonpareil a beauty. Rather you will be filled with the delicious amazement that comes of seeing your image suspended upside down. The world is full of a number of things, but few of them have given pleasure to a greater multitude of human beings than this. It projects you into a world that laughs at reality like the world you read about in "Jack and the Beanstalk." Men of science may have a reasonable explanation of the inverted image in the hollow of a spoon. I neither know, nor admit it. I am content to look on the matter as a mystery of nature requiring no explanation, like the shape of a flatfish. Turn the spoon upside down, turn it sideways, and still the image hangs head downwards. Let us not try to rationalize miracles. If we understood all that we see in the hollow of a spoon, we should understand everything, and the human mind is not meant for that. Teapots are, it may be, less mysterious than spoons, but they have the advantage that they introduce us to a larger and more varied spectacle. Man, looking into a spoon, is an egotist—a disappointed egotist, no doubt, but still a self-regarding and self-scrutinizing creature. The world is hidden from him by his own image, and even the room in which he sits scarcely exists for him as he gazes on his eyebrows, his nose and his mouth, and turns them this way and that for a more curious view. In the round silver teapot, however, the

walls of the room become real to him, hung with even tinier and more charming pictures than any that were painted for the Queen's Dolls' House. He sees, too, the images of other people, and cups, and chairs, and the toast-rack, and books, and the bowl of flowers. He sees the firelight dancing and lighting up a room prettier than the crookedest room in the little crooked house of the nursery rhyme. It is true that, by putting his face near the teapot, he is again brought up against the vision of the extravagant nose that he had seen in the spoon, and that the smallest child in the world can make its hand seem the largest thing in existence by advancing it towards the silver bulge of the pot. These, however, are the mere moments of egotism in an interest that embraces every minutest detail among the things reflected. In the teapot the ego can escape from its prison and take a light-hearted and objective view of things. That, I fancy, is the second secret of happiness.

It is one of the distinctions of bed-knobs that in their manner of reflecting the outside world they effect a reasonable compromise between the egotism of the back of the spoon and the altruism of the teapot. I speak from memory on this matter—I have searched the house in which I live for a bed-knob in order to put it to the test, and have searched, alas, in vain—but I am almost certain that in a perfect bed-knob one can see one's own face and at the same time get a sufficient glimpse of the world in general. A tiny wash-hand-stand and a tiny towel-rail, a tiny coal-scuttle and a tinier kitten, are visible in the distance in that brilliant sphere. One can look into it and see the nurse getting smaller as she draws near a diminutive cupboard and takes out of it a tea-canister so small that it would be lost in the hollow of a fairy's thimble. It was in

the gleaming round of a bed-knob, I fancy, that Mr. de la Mare first saw the Midget.

And yet I doubt if our love of bed-knobs had at first much to do with the mysterious life that goes on in the heart of the little brass planet from the first raising of the blind. We loved bed-knobs chiefly because we could unscrew them. We made the attempt with feeble fingers when it was still a Herculean task. And then one day the knob began to move, slowly, and turn by turn, till suddenly it was free in the hand, leaving the screw discrowned and naked. Strange to say, the screw, lacking though it was either in the beauties that charm the eye or in those that warm the heart, never disappointed us. For all its uncomeliness, it had at least one unending excellence: it was something on to which you could screw a bed-knob. It is true that you did not always screw on the bed-knob very skilfully. Sometimes it got a twist that set it a-tilt on its eminence like a drunkard's hat. This was especially often the case when you had been unscrewing it and screwing it for years, and the thread of the screw got worn or the inside of the knob had lost its power to grip. Children, indeed, are rough in their methods, and have little mercy on such things as bed-knobs. They experiment. They wish to find out whether the knob at the right hand of the bottom of the bed will fit the screw at the left hand of the bottom of the bed, and whether the smaller knobs at the foot of the bed will fit the screws at the top. This is bad for bed-knobs, and accounts for the battered expression that they wear as they rest at uneasy angles. What I never could make out, however, was how bed-knobs got lost. Children leave them lying on the floor; they might even use them as appurtenances of a game and mislay them amid the ragged chaos of their toys. But no child ever

threw a bed-knob out of the window, and there is no other exit save the door. It is hardly conceivable that even the most careless servant could sweep up so obvious a utility into the dip of her dust-pan. Yet how else did the knob from the left-hand bottom corner of my bed disappear? Week after week, month after month, it had fallen again and again from its worn-out screw at a touch. Then, I suppose, someone got tired of hearing it fall, and instead of putting it back, placed it on the mantelpiece where it would be beyond accident. Then someone else, weary of the sight of so unbecoming an ornament on the mantelpiece, threw it into a drawer or cast it up on a heap of broken things for the dust-bin. Whatever may have been its fate, I woke up every morning for years into a ruined world in which one of the first sights that met my eyes was that forlorn and widowed screw. You may think that the absence of a single bed-knob would make little difference to the appearance of a room, but in point of fact it made the whole room look awry, producing as disastrous an effect as would the absence of a tie in a man in evening dress. It may be that Camden Town is fuller than most places of homes in which such mysterious disappearances have taken place, and that tidy householders do consequently need bed-knobs in such quantities as to give them a value above scissors in the hardware shops. Or, perhaps, it is the children who insist on having the four corners of their beds restored after loss with each golden ball complete. Children are pampered nowadays.

Pampered though they may be, however, I do not envy those of them who sleep in wooden beds. That child alone is to be envied who sleeps in an iron bed with not only a knob at each corner, but with numbers of other little knobs, golden and globular satellites of the great knobs, perching

on every bar. How does a modern child, sleeping in a wooden bed, contrive to get through the day without weariness? It is bound to get into mischief with its idle hands. The child, on the other hand, who lives in a house that is full of beds with brass knobs has always something to do, and for such a child Satan spreads his net in vain.

A. A. MILNE

GOING OUT TO DINNER

IF you are one of those lucky people whose motor is not numbered (as mine is) 19 or 11 or 22, it does not really matter where your host for the evening prefers to live; Bayswater or Battersea or Blackheath—it is all the same to your chauffeur. But for those of us who have to fight for bus or train or taxicab, it is different. We have to say to ourselves, "Is it worth it?" A man who lives in Chelsea (for instance) demands more from an invitation to Hampstead than from an invitation to Kensington. If such a man were interested in people rather than in food, he might feel that one actor-manager and a rural dean among his fellow-guests would be sufficient attraction in a Kensington house, but that at least two archbishops and a revue-producer would have to be forthcoming at Hampstead before the journey on a wet night would be justified. On the other hand, if he were a vulgar man who preferred food to people, he would divide London up into whisky, burgundy, and champagne areas according to their accessibility from his own house; and on receiving an invitation to a house in the outer or champagne area (as it might be at Dulwich), he would try to discover, either by inquiry among his friends or by employing a private detective, whether this house fulfilled the necessary condition. If not, of course, then he would write a polite note to say that he would be in the country, or confined to his bed with gout, on the day in question.

I am as fond of going out to dinner as anyone else is, but there is a moment, just before I begin to array myself for it, when I wish that it were on some other evening. If

the telephone bell rings, I say "Thank Heavens, Mrs. Parkinson-Jones has died suddenly. I mean, how sad," and, looking as solemn as I can, I pick up the receiver.

"Is that the Excelsior Laundry?" says a voice. "You only sent back half a pair of socks this week."

I replace the receiver and go reluctantly upstairs to dress. There is no help for it. As I dress, I wonder who my partner at the table will be, and if at this moment she is feeling as gloomy about the prospect as I am. How much better if we had both dined comfortably at home.

I remember some years ago taking in a Dowager Countess. Don't think I am priding myself on this; I realize as well as you do that a mistake of some sort was made. Probably my hostess took me for somebody else—Sir Thomas Lipton, it may have been. Anyway the Dowager Countess and I led the way downstairs to the dining-room, and all the other guests murmured to themselves, "Who on earth is that?" and told each other that no doubt I was one of the Serbian Princes who had recently arrived in the country. I forget what the Countess and I talked about; probably yachts, or tea; but I was not paying much attention to our conversation. I had other things to think about.

For the Dowager Countess (wisely, I think) was dieting herself. She went through the evening on a glass of water and two biscuits. Each new dish on its way round the table was brought first to her; she waved it away, and it came to me. There was nothing to be done. I had to open it.

My particular memory is of a quail-pie. Quails may be all right for Moses in the desert, but, if they are served in the form of pie at dinner, they should be distributed at a side-table, not handed round from guest to guest. The Countess having shuddered at it and resumed her biscuit,

it was left to me to make the opening excavation. The difficulty was to know where each quail began and ended ; the job really wanted a professional quail-finder, who might have indicated the point on the surface of the crust at which it would be most hopeful to dig for quails.

As it was, I had to dig at random, and, being unlucky, I plunged the knife straight into the middle of a bird. It was impossible, of course, to withdraw the quail through the slit I had thus made in the pastry, nor could I get my knife out (with a bird sticking on the end of it) in order to make a second slit at a suitable angle. I tried to shake the quail off inside the pie, but it was fixed too firmly. I tried pulling it off against the inside of the crust, but it became obvious that if I persisted in this, the whole roof would come off. The footman, with great presence of mind, realized my difficulty and offered me a second knife. Unfortunately, I misjudged the width of quails, and plunging this second knife into the pie a little farther on, I landed into the middle of another quail no less retentive of cutlery than the first. The dish now began to look more like a game than a pie, and, waving away a third knife, I said (quite truly by this time) that I didn't like quails, and that on second thoughts I would ask the Dowager Countess to lend me a biscuit.

Fortunately, dinner is not all quail-pie. But even in the case of some more amenable dish, the first-comer is in a position of great responsibility. Casting a hasty eye round the company, he has to count the number of diners, estimate the size of the dish, divide the one by the other, and take a helping of the appropriate size, knowing that the fashion which he inaugurates will be faithfully followed. How much less exacting is the position of the more lowly-placed man ; my own, for instance, on ordinary occasions.

There may be two quails and an egg-cup left when the footman reaches me, or even only the egg-cup, but at least I have nobody but myself to consider.

But let us get away from food for the body, and consider food for the mind. I refer to that intellectual conversation which it is the business of the guests at a dinner-party to contribute. Not "What shall we eat?" but "What shall we talk about?" is the question which is really disturbing us as we tug definitely at our necktie and give a last look at ourselves in the glass before following the servant upstairs.

"Will you take in Miss Montmorency?" says our hostess.

We bow to Miss Montmorency hopefully.

"Er—jolly day it's been, hasn't it?"

No, really, we can't say anything about the weather. We must be original.

"Er—have you been to any theatres lately?"

No, no, everybody says that. Well, then, what *can* we say? Let us try again.

"How do you do. Er—I see by the paper this evening that the Bolsheviks have captured Omsk."

"Captured Whatsk?"

"Omsk." Or was it Tomsk? Fortunately it does not matter, for Miss Montmorency is not the least interested.

"Oh!" she says.

I hate people who say "Oh!" It means that you have to begin all over again.

"I've been playing golfsk—I mean golf—this afternoon," we try. "Do you play at all?"

"No."

Then it is no good telling her what our handicap is.

"No doubt you prefer tennis," we hazard.

"Oh, no."

"I mean bridge."

"I don't play any game," she answers.

Then the sooner she goes away and talks to somebody else the better.

"Ah, I expect you're more interested in the theatre?"

"I hardly ever go to the theatre."

"Well, of course, a good book by the fireside——"

"I never read," she says.

Dash the woman, what *does* she do? But before we can ask her, she lets us into the great secret.

"I like talking," she says.

Good heavens! What else have we been trying to do all this time?

However, it is only the very young girl at her first dinner-party whom it is difficult to entertain. At her second dinner-party, and thereafter, she knows the whole art of being amusing. All she has to do is to listen; all we men have to do is to tell her about ourselves. Indeed, sometimes I think that it is just as well to begin at once. Let us be quite frank about it, and get to work as soon as we are introduced.

"How do you do. Lovely day it has been, hasn't it? It was on just such a day as this, thirty-five years ago, that I was born in the secluded village of Puddlecome of humble but honest parents. Nestling among the western hills . . ."

And so on. Ending at the dessert, with the thousand we earned that morning.

A VILLAGE CELEBRATION

ALTHOUGH our village is a very small one, we had fifteen men serving in the Forces before the war was over. Fortunately, as the Vicar well said, "we were wonderfully blessed in that none of us was called upon to make the great sacrifice." Indeed, with the exception of Charlie Rudd, of the Army Service Corps, who was called upon to be kicked by a horse, the village did not even suffer any casualties. Our rejoicings at the conclusion of Peace were whole-hearted.

Naturally, when we met to discuss the best way in which to give expression to our joy, our first thoughts were with our returned heroes. Miss Travers, who plays the organ with considerable expression on Sundays, suggested that a drinking fountain erected on the village green would be a pleasing memorial of their valour, if suitably inscribed. For instance, it might say, "In gratitude to our brave defenders who leaped to answer their country's call," followed by their names. Embury, the cobbler, who is always a wet blanket on these occasions, asked if "leaping" was the exact word for a young fellow who got into khaki in 1918, and then only in answer to his country's police. The meeting was more lively after this, and Mr. Bates, of Hill Farm, had to be personally assured by the Vicar that for his part he quite understood how it was that young Robert Bates had been unable to leave the farm before, and he was sure that our good friend Embury meant nothing personal by his, if he might say so, perhaps somewhat untimely observation. He would suggest himself that some such phrase as "who gallantly answered" would be more

in keeping with Miss Travers' beautiful idea. He would venture to put it to the meeting that the inscription should be amended in this sense.

Mr. Claydon, the grocer and draper, interrupted to say that they were getting on too fast. Supposing they agreed upon a drinking fountain, who was going to do it? Was it going to be done in the village, or were they going to get sculptors and architects and such-like people from London? And if so—— The Vicar caught the eye of Miss Travers, and signalled to her to proceed; whereupon she explained that, as she had already told the Vicar in private, her nephew was studying art in London, and she was sure he would only be too glad to get Augustus James or one of those Academy artists to think of something really beautiful.

At this moment Embury said that he would like to ask two questions. First question—In what order were the names of our gallant defenders to be inscribed? The Vicar said that, speaking entirely without preparation and on the spur of the moment, he would imagine that an alphabetical order would be the most satisfactory. There was a general "Hear, hear," led by the Squire, who thus made his first contribution to the debate. "That's what I thought," said Embury. "Well, then, second question—What's coming out of the fountain?" The Vicar, a little surprised, said that presumably, my dear Embury, the fountain would give forth water. "Ah!" said Embury with great significance, and sat down.

Our village is a little slow at getting on to things; "leaping" is not the exact word for our movements at any time, either of brain or body. It is not surprising, therefore, that even Bates failed to realize for a moment that his son's name was to have precedence on a water-fountain.

But when once he realized it, he refused to be pacified by the cobbler's explanation that he had only said "Ah!" Let those who had anything to say, he observed, speak out openly, and then we should know where we were. Embury's answer, that one could generally guess where *some* people were, and not be far wrong, was drowned in the ecclesiastical applause which greeted the rising of the Squire.

The Squire said that he—er—hadn't—er—intended—er—to say anything. But he thought—er—if he might—er—intervene—to—er—say something on the matter of—er—a matter which—er—well, they all knew what it was—in short—er—money. Because until they knew how they—er—stood, it was obvious that—it was obvious—quite obvious—well it was a question of how they stood. Whereupon he sat down.

The Vicar said that as had often happened before, the sound common-sense of Sir John had saved them from undue rashness and precipitancy. They were getting on a little too fast. Their valued friend Miss Travers had made what he was not ashamed to call a suggestion both rare and beautiful, but alas! in these prosaic modern days the sordid question of pounds, shillings and pence could not be wholly disregarded. How much money would they have?

Everybody looked at Sir John. There was an awkward silence, in which the Squire joined. . . .

Amid pushings and whisperings from his corner of the room, Charlie Rudd said that he would just like to say a few words for the boys, if all were willing. The Vicar said that certainly, certainly he might, my dear Rudd. So Charlie said that he would just like to say that with all respect to Miss Travers, who was a real lady, and many was the packet of fags he'd had from her out there, and all the other

boys could say the same, and if some of them joined up sooner than others, well perhaps they did, but they all tried to do their bit, just like those who stayed at home, and they'd thrashed Jerry, and glad of it, fountains or no fountains, and pleased to be back again and see them all, just the same as ever, Mr. Bates and Mr. Embury and all of them, which was all he wanted to say, and the other boys would say the same, hoping no offence was meant, and that was all he wanted to say.

When the applause had died down, Mr. Clayton said that, in his opinion, as he had said before, they were getting on too fast. Did they want a fountain, that was the question. Who wanted it? The Vicar replied that it would be a beautiful memento for their children of the stirring times through which their country had passed. Mr. Embury asked if Mr. Bates' child wanted a memento of—— “This is a general question, my dear Embury,” said the Vicar.

There rose slowly to his feet the landlord of the Dog and Duck. Celebrations, he said. We were celebrating this here peace. Now as man to man, what did celebrations mean? He asked any of them. What did it mean? Celebrations meant celebrating, and celebrating meant sitting down hearty-like, sitting down like Englishmen and—and celebrating. First, find how much money they'd got, same as Sir John said; that was right and proper. Then if so be as they wanted to leave the rest to *him* well he'd be proud to do his best for them. They knew him. Do fair by him and he'd do fair by them. Soon as he knew how much money they'd got, and how many were going to sit down, then he could get to work. That was all *he'd* got to say about celebrations.

The enthusiasm was tremendous. But the Vicar looked

anxious, and whispered to the Squire. The Squire shrugged his shoulders and murmured something, and the Vicar rose. They would all be glad to hear, he said, glad but not surprised, that with his customary generosity the Squire had decided to throw open his own beautiful gardens and pleasure-grounds to them on Peace Day and to take upon his own shoulders the burden of entertaining them. He would suggest that they now give Sir John three hearty cheers. This was done, and the proceedings closed.

A LOST MASTERPIECE

THE short essay on "The Improbability of the Infinite" which I was planning for you yesterday will now never be written. Last night my brain was crammed with lofty thoughts on the subject—and for that matter, on every other subject. My mind was never so fertile. Ten thousand words on any theme from Tintacks to Tomatoes would have been easy to me. That was last night. This morning I have only one word in my brain, and I cannot get rid of it. The word is "Teralbay."

Teralbay is not a word which one uses much in ordinary life. Rearrange the letters, however, and it becomes such a word. A friend—no, I can call him a friend no longer—a person gave me this collection of letters as I was going to bed and challenged me to make a proper word of it. He added that Lord Melbourne—this, he alleged, is a well-known historical fact—Lord Melbourne had given this word to Queen Victoria once, and it had kept her awake the whole night. After this, one could not be so disloyal as to solve it at once. For two hours or so, therefore, I merely toyed with it. Whenever I seemed to be getting warm I hurriedly thought of something else. This quixotic loyalty has been the undoing of me; my chances of a solution have slipped by, and I am beginning to fear that they will never return. While this is the case, the only word I can write about is Teralbay.

Teralbay—what does it make? There are two ways of solving a problem of this sort. The first is to waggle your eyes and see what you get. If you do this, words like "alterably" and "laboratory" emerge, which a little thought

shows you to be wrong. You may then waggle your eyes again, look at it upside down or sideways, or stalk it carefully from the south-west and plunge upon it suddenly when it is not ready for you. In this way it may be surprised into giving up its secret. But if you find that it cannot be captured by strategy or assault, then there is only one way of taking it. It must be starved into surrender. This will take a long time, but victory is certain.

There are eight letters in Teralbay and two of them are the same, so that there must be 181,440 ways of writing the letters out. This may not be obvious to you at once; you may have thought that it was only 181,439; but you may take my word for it that I am right. (Wait a moment while I work it out again. . . . Yes, that's it.) Well, now suppose that you put down a new order of letters—such as “raytable”—every six seconds, which is very easy going, and suppose that you can spare an hour a day for it; then by the 303rd day—a year hence, if you rest on Sundays—you are bound to have reached a solution.

But perhaps this is not playing the game. This, I am sure, is not what Queen Victoria did. And now I think of it, history does not tell us what she did do, beyond that she passed a sleepless night. (And that she still liked Melbourne afterwards—which is surprising.) *Did* she ever guess it? Or did Lord Melbourne have to tell her in the morning, and did she say, “Why, of course!” I expect so. Or did Lord Melbourne say, “I’m awfully sorry, madam, but I find I put a ‘y’ in too many?” But no—history could not have remained silent over such a tragedy as that. Besides, she went on liking him.

When I die “Teralbay” will be written on my heart. While I live it shall be my telegraphic address. I shall patent a breakfast food called “Teralbay”; I shall say

"Teralbay!" when I miss a 2-ft. putt; the Teralbay carnation will catch your eye at the Temple show. I shall write anonymous letters over the name. "Fly at once; all is discovered—TERALBAY." Yes, that would look rather well.

I wish I knew more about Lord Melbourne. What sort of words did he think of? The thing couldn't be "aeroplane" or "telephone" or "googly," because these weren't invented in his time. That gives us three words less. Nor, probably, would it be anything to eat; a Prime Minister would hardly discuss such subjects with his Sovereign. I have no doubt that after hours of immense labour you will triumphantly suggest "rateably". I suggested that myself, but it is wrong. There is no such word in the dictionary. The same objection applies to "bat-early"—it ought to mean something, but it doesn't.

So I hand it over to you. Please do not send the solution to me, for by the time you read this I shall either have found it out or else I shall be in a nursing home. In either case it will be of no use to me. Send it to the Postmaster-General or one of the Geddeses or Mary Pickford. You will want to get it off your mind.

As for myself I shall write to my fr——, to the person who first said "Teralbay" to me, and ask him to make something of "sabet" and "donureb." When he has worked out the correct solutions—which, in case he gets the wrong ones, I may tell him here are "beast" and "bounder"—I shall search the dictionary for some long word like "intellectual." I shall alter the order of the letters and throw in a couple of "g's" and a "k." And then I shall tell them to keep a spare bed for him in my nursing home.

Well, I have got "Teralbay" a little off my mind. I

feel better able now to think of other things. Indeed, I might almost begin my famous essay on "The Improbability of the Infinite." It would be a pity for the country to lose such a masterpiece—she has had quite enough trouble already what with one thing and another. For my view of the Infinite is this: that although beyond the Finite, or, as one might say, the Commensurate, there may or may not be a——

Just a moment. I think I have it now. T—R—A——
No. . . .

SUPERSTITION

I HAVE just read a serious column on the prospects for next year. This article consisted of contributions from experts in the various branches of industry (including one from a meteorological expert who, I need hardly tell you, forecasted a wet summer) and ended with a general summing up of the year by Old Moore or one of the minor prophets. Old Moore, I am sorry to say, left me cold.

I should like to believe in astrology, but I cannot. I should like to believe that the heavenly bodies sort themselves into certain positions in order that Zadkiel may be kept in touch with the future; the idea of a star whizzing a million miles out of its path by way of indicating a "sensational divorce case in high life" is extraordinarily massive. But, candidly, I do not believe the stars bother. What the stars are for, what they are like when you get there, I do not know; but a starry night would not be so beautiful if it were simply meant as a warning to some unpleasant financier that Kaffirs were going up. The ordinary man looks at the heavens and thinks what an insignificant atom he is beneath them; the believer in astrology looks up and realizes afresh his overwhelming importance. Perhaps, after all, I am glad I do not believe.

Life must be a very tricky thing for the superstitious. At dinner a night or two ago I happened to say that I had never been in danger of drowning. I am not sure now that it was true, but I still think that it was harmless. However, before I had time to elaborate my theme (whatever it was) I was peremptorily ordered to touch wood. I

protested that both my feet were on the polished oak and both my elbows on the polished mahogany (one always knew that *some* good instinct inspired the pleasant habit of elbows on the table) and that anyhow I did not see the need. However, because one must not argue at dinner I tapped the table two or three times . . . and now I suppose I am immune. At the same time I should like to know exactly whom I have appeased.

For this must be the idea of the wood-touching superstition, that a malignant spirit dogs one's conversational footsteps, listening eagerly for the complacent word. "I have never had the mumps," you say airily. "Ha, ha!" says the spirit, "haven't you? Just you wait till next Tuesday, my boy." Unconsciously we are crediting Fate with our own human weaknesses. If a man standing on the edge of a pond said aloud, "I have never fallen into a pond in my life," and we happened to be just behind him, the temptation to push him in would be irresistible. Irresistible, that is by us; but it is charitable to assume that Providence can control itself by now.

Of course, nobody really thinks that our good or evil spirits have any particular feeling about wood, that they like it stroked; nobody, I suppose, not even the most superstitious, really thinks that Fate is especially touchy in the matter of salt and ladders. Equally, of course, many people who throw spilt salt over their left shoulders are not superstitious in the least, and are only concerned to display that readiness in the face of any social emergency which is said to be the mark of good manners. But there are certainly many who feel that it is the part of a wise man to propitiate the unknown, to bend before the forces which work for harm; and they pay tribute to Fate by means of these little customs in the hope that they will secure

in return an immunity from evil. The tribute is nominal, but it is an acknowledgment all the same.

A proper sense of proportion leaves no room for superstition. A man says, "I have never been in a shipwreck," and becoming nervous touches wood. Why is he nervous? He has this paragraph before his eyes: "Among the deceased was Mr. —. By a remarkable coincidence this gentleman had been saying only a few days before that he had never been in a shipwreck. Little did he think that his next voyage would falsify his words so tragically." It occurs to him that he has read paragraphs like that again and again. Perhaps he has. Certainly he has never read a paragraph like this: "Among the deceased was Mr. —. By a remarkable coincidence this gentleman had never made the remark that he had not yet been in a shipwreck." Yet that paragraph could have been written truthfully thousands of times. A sense of proportion would tell you that, if only one side of a case is ever recorded, that side acquires an undue importance.

The truth is that Fate does not go out of its way to be dramatic. If you or I had the power of life and death in our hands, we should no doubt arrange some remarkably bright and telling effects. A man who spilt the salt callously would be drowned next week in the Dead Sea, and a couple who married in May would expire simultaneously in the May following. But Fate cannot worry to think out all the clever things that we should think out. It goes about its business solidly and unromantically, and by the ordinary laws of chance it achieves every now and then something startling and romantic. Superstition thrives on the fact that only the accidental dramas are reported.

But there are charms to secure happiness as well as

charms to avert evil. In these I am a firm believer. I do not mean that I believe that a horseshoe hung up in the house will bring me good luck ; I mean that if anybody does believe this, then the hanging up of his horseshoe will probably bring him good luck. For if you believe that you are going to be lucky, you go about your business with a smile, you take disaster with a smile, you start afresh with a smile. And to do that is to be in the way of happiness.

“WHO’S WHO”

I LIKE my novels long. When I had read three pages of this one I glanced at the end, and found to my delight that there were two thousand seven hundred and twenty-five pages more to come. I returned with a sigh of pleasure to page 4. I was just at the place where Leslie Patrick Abercrombie wins the prize “for laying out Prestatyn,” some local wrestler, presumably, who had challenged the crowd at a country fair. After laying him out, Abercrombie returns to his books and becomes editor of the *Town Planning Review*. A wonderfully drawn character.

The plot of this oddly named novel is too complicated to describe at length. It opens with the conferment of the C.M.G. on Kuli Khan Abbas in 1903, an incident of which the anonymous author might have made a good deal more, and closes with a brief description of the Rev. Samuel Marinus Zwemer’s home in New York City; but much has happened in the meanwhile. Thousands of characters have made their brief appearance on the stage, and have been hustled off to make room for others, but so unerringly are they drawn that we feel that we are in the presence of living people. Take Colette Willy, for example, who comes in on page 2656 at a time when the *dénouement* is clearly at hand. The author, who is working up to his great scene—the appointment of Dr. Norman Wilsmore to the International Commission for the Publication of Annual Tables of Physical and Chemical Constants—draws her for us in a few lightning touches. She is “authoress, actress.” She has written two little books: *Dialogue de Bêtes* and *La Retraite Sentimentale*. That is all. But is

it not enough ? Has he not made Colette Willy live before us ? A lesser writer might have plunged into elaborate details about her telephone number and her permanent address, but, like the true artist that he is, our author leaves all those things unsaid. For though he can be a realist when necessary (as in the case of Wallis Budge, to which I shall refer directly), he does not hesitate to trust to the impressionist sketch when the situation demands it.

Wallis Budge is apparently the hero of the tale ; at any rate, the author devotes most space to him—some hundred and twenty lines or so. He does not appear until page 341, by which time we are on familiar terms with some two or three thousand of the less important characters. It is typical of the writer that, once he has described a character to us, has (so to speak) set him on his feet, he appears to lose interest in his creation, and it is only rarely that further reference is made to him. Alfred Budd, for instance, who became British Vice-Consul of San Sebastian in 1907, and resides, as the intelligent reader will have guessed, at the San Sebastian British Vice-Consulate, obtains the M.V.O. in 1908. Nothing is said, however, of the resultant effect on his character, nor is any adequate description given—either then or later—of the San Sebastian scenery. On the other hand, Bucy, who first appears on page 340, turns up again on page 644 as the Marquess de Bucy, a Grandee of Spain. I was half-expecting that the body would be discovered about this time, but the author is still busy over his protagonists, and only leaves the Marquess in order to introduce to us his three musketeers, de Bunsen, de Burgh, and de Butts.

But it is time that I returned to our hero, Dr. Wallis Budge. Although Budge is a golfer of world-wide experience, having “conducted excavations in Egypt, the

Island of Meroe, Nineveh and Mesopotamia," it is upon his mental rather than his athletic abilities that the author dwells most lovingly. The fact that in 1886 he wrote a pamphlet upon *The Coptic History of Elijah the Tishbite*, and followed it up in 1888 with one on *The Coptic Martyrdom of George of Cappadocia* (which is, of course, in every drawing-room), may not seem at first to have much bearing upon the tremendous events which followed later. But the author is artistically right in drawing our attention to them; for it is probable that, had these popular works not been written, our hero would never have been encouraged to proceed with his *Magical Texts of Za-Walda-Hawâryât, Tasfâ Maryâm, Sebhat-Le'ab, Gabra Shelâsé Tezâzu, Ahêta-Mîkâél*, which had such a startling effect on the lives of all the other characters, and led indirectly to the finding of the blood-stain on the bath-mat. My own suspicions fell immediately upon Thomas Rooke, of whom we are told nothing more than "R.W.S.," which is obviously the cabbalistic sign of some secret society.

One of the author's weaknesses is a certain carelessness in the naming of his characters. For instance, no fewer than two hundred and forty-one of them are called Smith. True, he endeavours to distinguish between them by giving them such different Christian names as John, Henry, Charles, and so forth, but the result is bound to be confusing. Sometimes, indeed, he does not even bother to distinguish between their Christian names. Thus we have three Henry Smiths, who appear to have mixed themselves up even in the author's mind. He tells us that Colonel Henry's chief recreation is "the study of the things around him," but it sounds much more like that of the Reverend Henry, whose opportunities in the pulpit would be considerably greater. It is the same with

the Thomsons, the Williamses and others. When once he hits upon one of these popular names, he is carried away for several pages, and insists on calling everybody Thomson. But occasionally he has an inspiration. Temistocle Zammit is a good name, though the humour of calling a famous musician Zimbalist is perhaps a little too obvious.

In conclusion, one can say that while our author's merits are many, his faults are of no great moment. Certainly he handles his love-scenes badly. Many of his characters are married but he tells us little of the early scenes of courtship, and says nothing of any previous engagements which were afterwards broken off. Also, he is apparently incapable of describing a child, unless it is the offspring of titled persons and will itself succeed to the title; even then he prefers to dismiss it in a parenthesis. But as a picture of the present-day Englishman his novel can hardly be surpassed. He is not a writer who is only at home with one class. He can describe the utterly unknown and unimportant with as much gusto as he describes the genius or the old nobility. True, he overcrowds his canvas, but one must recognize this as his method. It is so that he expresses himself best; just as one painter can express himself best in a rendering of the whole Town Council of Slapphenam, while another only requires a single haddock on a plate.

His future will be watched with interest. He hints in his introduction that he has another volume in preparation, in which he will introduce to us several entirely new C.B.E.'s, besides carrying on the histories (in the familiar manner of our modern novelists) of many of those with whom we have already made friends. *Who's Who*, 1920, it is to be called, and I, for one, shall look out for it with the utmost eagerness.

THE DIARY HABIT

A NEWSPAPER has been lamenting the decay of the diary-keeping habit, with the natural result that several correspondents have written to say that they have kept diaries all their lives. No doubt all these diaries now contain the entry, "Wrote to the *Daily* — to deny the assertion that the diary-keeping habit is on the wane." Of such little things are diaries made.

I suppose this is the reason why diaries are so rarely kept nowadays—that nothing ever happens to anybody. A diary would be worth writing up if it could be written like this :—

Monday.—"Another exciting day. Shot a couple of hooligans on my way to business and was forced to give my card to the police. On arriving at the office was surprised to find the building on fire, but was just in time to rescue the confidential treaty between England and Switzerland. Had this been discovered by the public, war would infallibly have resulted. Went out to lunch and saw a runaway elephant in the Strand. Thought little of it at the time, but mentioned it to my wife in the evening. She agreed that it was worth recording."

Tuesday.—"Letter from solicitor informing me that I have come into £1,000,000 through the will of an Australian gold-digger named Tomkins. On referring to my diary I find that I saved his life two years ago by plunging into the Serpentine. This is very gratifying. Was late at the office as I had to look in at the Palace on the way, in order to get knighted, but managed to get a good deal of work done before I was interrupted by a madman with

a razor, who demanded £100. Shot him after a desperate struggle. Tea at an A B C, where I met the Duke of ——. Fell into the Thames on my way home, but swam ashore without difficulty.”

Alas ! we cannot do this. Our diaries are very prosaic, very dull indeed. They read like this :—

Monday.—“ Felt inclined to stay in bed this morning and send an excuse to the office, but was all right after a bath and breakfast. Worked till 1.30 and had lunch. Afterwards worked till five, and had my hair cut on the way home. After dinner read *A Man's Passion*, by Theodora Popgood. Rotten. Went to bed at eleven.”

Tuesday.—“ Had a letter from Jane. Did some good work in the morning, and at lunch met Henry, who asked me to play golf with him on Saturday. Told him I was playing with Peter, but said I would like a game with him on the Saturday after. However, it turned out he was playing with William then, so we couldn't fix anything up. Bought a pair of shoes on my way home, but think they will be too tight. The man says, though, that they will stretch.”

Wednesday.—“ Played dominoes at lunch and won fivepence.”

If this sort of diary is now falling into decay, the world is not losing much. But at least it is a harmless pleasure to some to enter up their day's doings each evening, and in years to come it may just possibly be of interest to the diarist to know that it was on Monday, 27th April, that he had his hair cut. Again, if in the future any question arose as to the exact date of Henry's decease, we should find in this diary proof that anyhow he was alive as late as Tuesday, 28th April. That might, though it probably won't, be of great importance. But there is another sort

of diary which can never be of any importance at all. I make no apology for giving a third selection of extracts.

Monday.—"Rose at nine and came down to find a letter from Mary. How little we know our true friends! Beneath the mask of outward affection there may lurk unknown to us the serpent's tooth of jealousy. Mary writes that she can make nothing for my stall at the bazaar as she has her own stall to provide for. Ate my breakfast mechanically, my thoughts being far away. What, after all, is life? Meditated deeply on the inner cosmos till lunch-time. Afterwards I lay down for an hour and composed my mind. I was angry this morning with Mary. Ah, how petty! Shall I never be free from the bonds of my own nature? Is the better self within me never to rise to the sublime heights of selflessness of which it is capable? Rose at four and wrote to Mary, forgiving her. This has been a wonderful day for the spirit."

Yes; I suspect that a good many diaries record adventures of the mind and soul for lack of stirring adventures to the body. If they cannot say, "Attacked by a lion in Bond Street to-day," they can at least say, "Attacked by doubt in St. Paul's Cathedral." Most people will prefer, in the absence of the lion, to say nothing, or nothing more important than "Attacked by the hairdresser with a hard brush"; but there are others who must get pen to paper somehow, and who find that only in regard to their emotions have they anything unique to say.

But, of course, there is ever within the breasts of all diarists the hope that their diaries may some day be revealed to the world. They may be discovered by some future^{er} generation, amazed at the simple doings of the twentieth century, or their publication may be demanded

by the next generation, eager to know the inner life of the great man just dead. Best of all, they may be made public by the writers themselves in their autobiographies.

Yes ; the diarist must always have his eye on a possible autobiography. " I remember," he will write in that great work, having forgotten all about it, " I distinctly remember "—and here he will refer to his diary—" meeting X. at lunch one Sunday and saying to him . . ."

What he said will not be of much importance, but it will show you what a wonderful memory the distinguished author retains in his old age.

A PROBLEM IN ETHICS

LIFE is full of little problems, which arise suddenly and find one wholly unprepared with a solution. For instance, you travel down to Wimbledon on the District Railway—first-class, let us suppose, because it is your birthday. On your arrival you find that you have lost your ticket. Now, doubtless there is some sort of recognized business to be gone through which relieves you of the necessity of paying again. You produce an affidavit of a terribly affirmative nature, together with your card and a testimonial from a beneficed member of the Church of England. Or you conduct a genial correspondence with the traffic manager which spreads itself over six months. To save yourself this bother you simply tell the collector that you haven't a ticket and have come from Charing Cross. Is it necessary to add "first-class"?

Of course one has a strong feeling that one ought to, but I think a still stronger feeling that one isn't defrauding the railway company if one doesn't. (I will try not to get so many "ones" into my next sentence.) For you may argue fairly that you established your right to travel first-class when you stepped into the carriage with your ticket—and, it may be, had it examined therein by an inspector. All that you want to do now is to establish your right to leave the Wimbledon platform for the purer air of the common. And you can do this perfectly easily with a third-class ticket.

However, this is a problem which will only arise if you are careless with your property. But however careful you are, it may happen to you at any moment that

you become suddenly the owner of a shilling with a hole in it.

I am such an owner. I entered into possession a week ago—Heaven knows who played the thing off on me. As soon as I made the discovery I went into a tobacconist's and bought a box of matches.

"This," he said, looking at me reproachfully, "is a shilling with a hole in it."

"I know," I said, "but it's all right, thanks. I don't want to wear it any longer. The fact is, Joanna has thrown me—— However, I needn't go into that."

He passed it back to me.

"I am afraid I can't take it," he said.

"Why not? I managed to."

However, I had to give him one without a hole before he would let me out of his shop. Next time I was more thoughtful. I handed three to the cashier at my restaurant in payment of lunch, and the ventilated one was in the middle. He saw the joke of it just as I was escaping down the stairs.

"Hi!" he said, "this shilling has a hole in it."

I went back and looked at it. Sure enough it had.

"Well, that's funny," I said. "Did you drop it, or what?"

He handed the keepsake back to me. He also had something of reproach in his eye.

"Thanks, very much," I said. "I wouldn't have lost it for worlds; Emily—— But I mustn't bore you with the story. Good day to you." And I gave him a more solid coin and went.

Well, that's how we are at present. A more unscrupulous person than myself would have palmed it off long ago. He would have told himself with hateful casuistry that the coin was none the worse for the air-hole in it, and that, if

everybody who came into possession of it pressed it on to the next man, nobody would be injured by its circulation. But I cannot argue like this. It pleases me to give my shilling a run with the others sometimes. I like to put it down on a counter with one or two more, preferably in the middle of them where the draught cannot blow through it; but I should indeed be surprised—I mean sorry—if it did not come back to me at once.

There is one thing, anyhow, that I will not do. I will not give it to a waiter or a taxi-driver or to anybody else as a tip. If you estimate the market value of a shilling with a hole in it at anything from ninepence to fourpence according to the owner's chances of getting rid of it, then it might be considered possibly a handsome, anyhow an adequate, tip for a driver; but somehow the idea does not appeal to me at all. For if the recipient did not see the hole, you would feel that you had been unnecessarily generous to him, and that one last effort to have got it off on to a shopkeeper would have been wiser; while if he did see it—well, we know what cabmen are. He couldn't legally object, it is a voluntary gift on your part, and even regarded as a contribution to his watch chain worthy of thanks, but—— Well, I don't like it. I don't think it's sportsmanlike.

However, I have an idea at last. I know a small boy who owns some lead soldiers. I propose to borrow one of these—a corporal or perhaps a sergeant—and boil him down, and then fill up the hole in the shilling with lead. Shillings, you know, are not solid silver; oh no, they have alloy in them. This one will have a little more than usual perhaps. One cannot tie oneself down to an ounce or two.

We set out, I believe, to discuss the morals of the question. It is a most interesting subject.

NATURAL SCIENCE

IT is when Parliament is not sitting that the papers are most interesting to read. I have found an item of news to-day which would never have been given publicity in the busy times, and it has moved me strangely. Here it is, backed by the authority of Dr. Chalmers Mitchell :

“The caterpillar of the puss-moth, not satisfied with Nature’s provisions for its safety, makes faces at young birds, and is said to alarm them considerably.”

I like that “is said to.” Probably the young bird would deny indignantly that he was alarmed, and would explain that he was only going away because he suddenly remembered that he had an engagement on the croquet lawn, or that he had forgotten his umbrella. But whether he alarms them or not, the fact remains that the caterpillar of the puss-moth does make faces at young birds ; and we may be pretty sure that, even if he began the practice in self-defence, the habit is one that has grown on him. Indeed, I can see him actually looking out for a thrush’s nest, and then climbing up to it, popping his head over the edge suddenly and making a face. Probably, too, the mother birds frighten their young ones by telling them that, if they aren’t good, the puss-moth caterpillar will be after them ; while the poor caterpillar himself, never having known a mother’s care, has had no one to tell him that if he goes on making such awful faces he will be struck like that one day.

These delvings into natural history bring back my youth very vividly. I never kept a puss-moth, but I had a goat-moth which ate its way out of a match-box, and as

Kew Gardens and such places, where our lecturer explained to his pupils—all grown-up save ourselves—the less recondite mysteries. There was one golden Saturday when we missed the rendezvous at Pinner and had a picnic by ourselves instead; and, after that, many other golden Saturdays when some unaccountable accident separated us from the party. I remember particularly a day in Highgate Woods—a good place for losing a botanical lecturer in; if you had been there, you would have seen two little boys very content, lying one each side of a large stone slab, racing caterpillars against each other.

But there was one episode in my career as a natural scientist—a career whose least details are brought back by the magic word, caterpillar—over which I still go hot with the sense of failure. This was an attempt to stuff a toad. I don't know to this day if toads can be stuffed, but when our toad died he had to be commemorated in some way, and, failing a marble statue, it seemed good to stuff him. It was when we had got the skin off him that we began to realize our difficulties. I don't know if you have had the skin of a fair-sized toad in your hand; if so, you will understand that our first feeling was one of surprise that a whole toad could ever have got into it. There seemed to be no shape about the thing at all. You could have carried it—no doubt we did, I have forgotten—in the back of a watch. But it had lost all likeness to a toad, and it was obvious that stuffing meant nothing to it.

Of course, little boys ought not to skin toads and carry geological hammers and deceive learned professors of botany; I know it is wrong. And of course caterpillars of the puss-moth variety oughtn't to make faces at timid young thrushes. But it is just these things which make